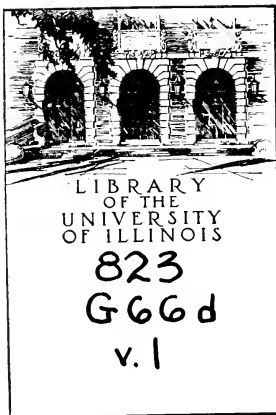


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THE
DEAN'S DAUGHTER;

OR,

THE DAYS WE LIVE IN.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS," "MRS. ARMYTAGE," "THE BANKER'S WIFE,"
&c. &c.

"Thus we play the fools with the time; and the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us."—SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1853.

LONDON :

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

TO
CHARLES DICKENS, ESQ.,
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED,
AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE
OF
REGARD, RESPECT, AND ADMIRATION.

ERRATA.



VOL. I.

- Page 31, line 7, *for* and to recognise *read* and rejoiced to recognise
,, 46, last line, *for* approached *read* approaches
,, 94, line 14, *for* Emma *read* Julia
,, 144, „ 9, *for* precise *read* precis
,, 171, „ 7, *for* polite *read* politic
,, 208, „ 16, *for* rebuke *read* repulse

VOL. II.

- Page 8, line 22, *for* But as even *read* But since even
,, 30, „ 8, *for* *idem* read *eadem*
,, 86, „ 8, *for* ungently *read* urgently
,, 101, „ 8, *for* her daughters *read* his daughters
,, 142, „ 12, *for* Goervayl *read* Goervyl

THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

A friend, or sister more beloved ;
My playmate when we both were clothed alike.

COLERIDGE.

OF the nine thousand seven hundred and thirteen inhabitants of the cathedral town of R——, none perhaps more popular than the Dean. The qualities which had won this universal affection were chiefly of a negative order. Early trouble and a natural deficiency of animal spirits, had endowed him with a serene gravity, highly becoming his vocation ; and when, on rare occasions, he emerged from

his stall to the pulpit, the spinster coteries of R——, subdued by the charm of his high-bred deportment and attenuated features, regarded his grey head as that of a saint.

The indolence which estranged him from their whist-tables, and the dyspepsia which enforced abstemiousness and sobriety, passed, somewhat gratuitously, at R—— for Christian virtues. But that he was mild and unassuming, though ennobled by birth as well as a dignitary of the Church, were merits no one could dispute.

Eminent, however, as was his present position, the Dean had undergone his share of the rough visitings of adversity. While his elder brother, Lord Mildenhall, enjoyed an income of fifteen thousand per annum, he, Reginald Mordaunt, was one of the nine younger children who divided among them as many hundreds; and though the army and navy, and the results of Egypt, Dunkirk, Assam, and the yellow fever, had decimated the tribe, Reginald, the best looking but puniest of

the family, had been fostered in a humble berth in the Church ; that he might eventually repay himself for the cares of curatehood, by the fine family living of Mildenhall.

As if covetous of the perils conceded to his martial brothers, he chose to create to himself the danger of starvation, by marrying, while still penniless and unbeneficed, a wife as high-born and poor, as delicate and helpless as himself. To the shame of his cloth be it spoken, it was a runaway match ; and the families of both parties, having before their eyes the fear of involuntary contributions to their maintenance, resolutely disowned the young couple. After contending four years against sickness and poverty, Lady Mary Mordaunt died ; if not for want of the necessities of life, certainly for want of its luxuries.

Constitutionally consumptive, the damp atmosphere of Bassingdon Parsonage did not agree with her ; but she could not afford to change it. Airings were prescribed for the invalid ; but she had no carriage. Her bed-

room looked to the north ; but her husband's humble dwelling afforded no alternative.

Robust people talk of the duty of looking such evils in the face, and conforming ourselves to the exigencies of our position in life ; and certain of Lady Mary's severely rational country neighbours hinted that the parson's wife gave way too much, that her husband spoiled her, that a little exertion would do her worlds of good. Thus taunted, she *did* exert herself, poor soul ; but, having brought into the world a little girl as feeble as her two elder children were strong and promising she fell into a rapid decline, and found refuge from further suffering in an untimely grave.

The censorious, though touched for a moment by pity and remorse, soon began to find as much fault with the afflicted widower, as formerly with his delicate wife.

“ It was really scandalous to see a minister of the gospel, like Mr Mordaunt, take on so unreasonably ! Anybody would suppose he was dissatisfied with the dispensations of Pro-

vidence. Instead of saying 'God's will be done,' as became his cloth, he was always fretting. When his parishioners called on business at the Parsonage, they were sure to find him in tears; and the sexton complained that his reverence was perpetually loitering in the church-yard, near his late lady's grave-stone: a pretty example of resignation to the parish of Bassingdon!"

A little later, and they accused him not only of rebellion against Providence, but of ingratitude towards his august mother-in-law, the Countess of Bournemouth; who condescended to relieve his hands of his sickly infant, by removing it to all the luxury and watchfulness of her dowager residence at Hephanger Hall. It was not for them to interpret Reginald Mordaunt's bitter reflection, that the tardy mercy vouchsafed by his wife's family to her child, might, if accorded to herself, have rescued her from a bed of sickness—an early grave. And though it was something to have his little motherless girl well tended and provided for,

he would have been better pleased to part with the two noisy boys, whose health and spirits were almost too much for his careworn mind.

Mordaunt was really an invalid ; really unable to bear at all times the companionship of children. But a bad education had found and left him selfish and inert ; and with the plea of domestic grief to sanctify his habits of indolence, he soon became a confirmed valetudinarian. Sorrow and sloth mutually nourished each other ; and though a kind-hearted man, the curate was often peevish, even with his boys, when their sports disturbed his occupations. By the time he had brooded five years over his affliction and the fate he accused himself of having inflicted on his lovely young wife, Lady Mary would have had a sorry time of it, could she have returned to earth, a second Eurydice, to listen to his murmurs, and contemplate his nervous head-aches.

The widower of Bassingdon Parsonage was, however, fond of the two boys, whose pastimes molested him, and who were beginning to suffer

from his neglect. Though little Reginald had attained his ninth year and Willy his eighth, he would not hear of sending them to school; and while he solaced himself with green tea and sal-volatile, his elder son was usually to be found ravaging some tall tree in the orchard; while Willy, of a more sociable turn, was enjoying a game at hop-sotch with the village ragamuffins.

In spite of these clandestine exploits, their life was a weary one. The daily lessons bestowed on them by their father fell as heavy on their young minds as is usually the case where teacher and pupil are equally reluctant. They saw that the close of the task was as great a relief to him as to themselves; and in such deference to his infirmities had they been reared, that when once he retired to his own room to enjoy one of his habitual fits of poorliness, no act of tyranny practised on them by the servants was a sufficient plea for intrusion. Papa's *sanctum* was sacred. The elder boy had more than once betaken himself a truant

to the woods, and been lost and found again, without any one having dared disturb, on his account, the parent who had found refuge from the cares of life in the mysteries of a patent medicine chest.

Time passed on ; till one summer day, some seven years after the death of Lady Mary, the two boys were preparing to enjoy a holiday, produced by their father's absence from home on compulsory business with the bishop of his diocese. On the threadbare carpet of the untidy parlour lay Reginald, arranging flies and hooks in the sheet of waste paper which served him for fishing-book ; while Willy, tiptoe on a rickety chair, was searching the bookshelves which contained their shabby juvenile library, for a volume less thumbed and familiar than the rest, to beguile a day in the woods, between the sports of bird's-nesting and squirrel-snaring. When lo ! the sound of wheels, and a carriage rolled to the door. Not the rattling dog-cart of the tax-gatherer,—not the one-horse chaise of a neighbouring curate,—not the family coach

of the squire of the parish ; but a handsome travelling chariot, with posters, and a scarcely perceptible coronet on the rail. In a moment all the curs in the stable-yard were on the bark, and the two equally shaggy boys on the *qui vive*.

Leaning on each other's shoulders, their bright sunburnt faces close together, like two over-ripe hazel-nuts in a tawny husk, they peered anxiously from the window ; awaiting the result of their slovenly servant maid's declaration that " Master was out for the day."

The voluminous old lady to whom the information was addressed, bustled, notwithstanding, out of the carriage ; followed by the tripsome figure of a richly-dressed little girl. Defying all remonstrances, the self-constituted guest persisted in paying off the post-boy, who, at her bidding, had already conveyed into the entry a chaise-seat and other encumbrances ; and now undertook to deposit at the village-inn the carriage for which there was no room in the parsonic chaise-house. And all this was accom-

plished before the two astonished lads could be half made to understand that the fussy old lady was their quondam nurse, Mrs. Hatley ; and the be-frilled little girl their sister, Margaret Mordaunt. The little stranger had no share in their thoughts or recollections. They had seldom heard her name. Of the mother who was with their Father in Heaven, or the sister who was in consequence estranged from them, Mr. Mordaunt had never nerved his courage to talk to the boys. Living in selfish dread of painful emotions, as fatal to his precarious health, he allowed them to grow up in utter ignorance of their family connections.

Indignant at the coolness of her reception, and disgusted by the aspect of the mean room and staring, rough-looking boys, the little girl insisted on rushing back into the carriage.

“I want to go back to Hephanger, Hatley. I won't stay here. I want to go home !” cried the disappointed child.

“But you are at home, my dear,” remon-

strated the nurse, after various useless endeavours to propitiate her refractory charge.

"No ! this can't be my papa's house !" persisted the child, angrily resisting Mrs. Hatley's attempts to untie her bonnet-strings.

"Didn't you hear me tell the post-boy, my darling, to drive to Bassingdon Parsonage ? And here we are at Bassingdon ; and these two young gentlemen is your dear little brothers, Master Regy and Master Willy, whom you've heerd me tell of, hundreds and hundreds of times ; and your dear papa, please God, will be here afore night."

The pampered child eyed the "dear little brothers" askance, as if strongly inclined to disown the relationship : the two shy, shabby boys being quite as unaccordant with her preconceived notions of life and manners, as the Parsonage parlour. Regy and Willy appeared to *her* eyes to lack only hurdy-gurdys and white mice, to resemble the ragged Savoyards of the London streets, occasionally relieved with sixpences by grandma. She still insisted on

immediate departure ; till her childish resentments ended in a burst of tears.

After sundry angry glances at the crying child, as though he longed to silence her as he would have done some village brat, by a good pummelling, Reginald gathered up his flies, and sulked off to his solitary sport. But Willy was moved to sympathy by the tears that deluged those waxen cheeks and soiled those silken curls ; and as soon as the haughty little lady could be prevailed on to disengage her face from Mrs. Hatley's lap, in which she had been stifling her sobs, she found her swarthy brother endeavouring to pacify her by the offer of his toys ; a torn picture-book, and a few mismatched marbles.

At sight of these humble treasures, the pompous nurse upraised her eyes and hands to Heaven. While drying the eyes of her spoiled nursling, she could not refrain from blessing the dear little heart of Master Willy—in former days her favourite in the Bassingdon nursery. But her benediction was not unaccompanied by

mutterings that “it was unackiountable no preparation should have been made to receive them; or that Mr. Mordaunt should not so much as have announced their coming. Still more unackiountable that the dear young gentlemen should be so neglected.—Well, well,—poor dear Lady Mary was after all, mayhap, taken from evil to come!”

CHAPTER II.

Like sportive deer, they chased about
And shouted as they ran ;
Turning to mirth the things of earth
As only boyhood can.

THOMAS HOOD.

THE fact was that the hypochondriac of Bassingdon—sorrow-stricken, sickness-stricken, and poverty-stricken—had reduced himself to so miserable a state of mental prostration, that he scarcely dared to open a letter, or act, or speak, or write, lest his selfish sensitiveness should experience some new torture.

When his mother-in-law, the Dowager Countess of Bournemouth, first intimated, by the

hand of her prim maiden daughter, Lady Milicent Bourne, that she was desirous of placing her little grand-daughter under his protection for a few weeks, during a sojourn she intended to make at the German Spas, he despatched in reply the indispensable assent ; but postponed the task of alluding to the subject in his own household. Sufficient unto the day of her coming, would be the shock of little Margaret's arrival. The disastrous circumstances of her birth connected themselves so painfully with the loss of his beloved wife, that she seemed far more intimately united in his mind with the Mary whom he still mourned, than the boys, who were no less her children.

On his return home to dinner, on the evening of her arrival, the sight of one so sadly recalling the fair and delicate being who had given her birth, completely overcame him. Even the nurse who had ministered to the death-bed of his wife, and placed her in her coffin, was an object sacred in his sight ; and little Margaret, strained in his arms, was ter-

rified by the emotions of the pale, black-coated, gray-haired stranger, whom she was bidden to embrace and honour.

"You must not be afraid of papa," whispered Willy, when he led her back into the corner where his shattered playthings had previously begun to engage her attention; "I never saw him so before. He never kisses, or cries over *us*. Most likely he will soon notice you as little as he does Regy and myself."

The boy was mistaken. Papa seemed never weary of admiring the grace and elegance of the little fairy, who so strikingly recalled the idol wrested from his arms. Her coming was as an angel visit, vouchsafed from above; the blooming of a choice flower in his dreary desert. Severely did he tax his narrow means to procure for little Margaret the luxuries to which she was accustomed. Even the fussy, palaver-ing Mrs. Hatley was to be conciliated for her sake; and the anxious father was almost grateful to Willy for the tenderness of his

endeavours to temper the wind of adversity to their shorn lamb.

Reginald, indeed, still continued to regard the intruder with the eye of a Cain. "Why was the girl to be treated as a princess, pray, and they as paupers? Why couldn't she stay at Hephanger during their grandmother's absence, if she was too good and great to share their hard fare?"

But though Willy had nothing to urge in reply, a natural instinct prompted him to vie with his father in ministering to the comfort of one who seemed strangely superior to their common fate.

Till he beheld his little aristocratic sister, he had not supposed that a being so beautiful existed on earth. Accustomed only to the dirt and uncouthness of the village clodhoppers, the high-bred delicacy of Margaret's features and complexion appeared supernatural. Her light step, her musical intonation, her thrilling laugh (and, reconciled to the parsonage by her father's idolatry and Willy's submission to her

whims, that laugh was not unfrequent) seemed to endow her with more than mortal attraction.

If she sometimes bewildered her rustic companion by descriptions of the grandeur of Hephanger, its ponies, aviaries, graperies, and tennis-court, she imparted far less charm to those remote regions than to the morsel of rough lawn attached to the parsonage; or the stream in whose crazy boat they shared their breakfast, and their "Robinson Crusoe."

"Chassez le naturel," says a great writer; "il revient au galop." The shabby and torn books containing the histories of "Philip Quarll" and "Goody Two Shoes," soon became more precious to little Margaret than the morocco-bound volumes which inculcated at Hephanger the lessons of demurer teachers. And when recalled to her adopted home, at the close of two happy months, by the return of Lady Bournemouth, she deeply regretted the quiet Parsonage, which her departure, for two of its inmates at least, reconverted into a wilderness.

Amid the softer scenery of Hephanger, the child could not forget her kind father, or her loving, sunny-faced brother. From morning till night, Lady Bournemouth was fated to hear of nothing but "darling Willy," and his good qualities; and it needed all the counter-evidence of Nurse Hatley, to convince the perplexed dowager that she was not grandmother to an angel.

"I'm sure, my lady, it would go to your ladyship's heart to see them two dear boys, that is those two poor young gentlemen, so shamefully neglected!" was the nurse's version of the Bassingdon memoirs. "Poor Mr. Mordaunt's so wrapped up in his troubles, as one may say, my lady, that he sees to nothing. The housekeeping is all at sixes and sevens; and I'm sure I never expected to see my late dear lady's sons a wearing ragged shirts as coarse as hopsack; or a adding up their sums on a bit of slate, for all the world like parish children. But that's not the worst. Master Regy's language, my lady, is a scandal

to listen to; and even his brother, though better spoken, has took up the 'orrid lower-class principles of the village scapegraces he's allowed to consort with."

The cautious dowager, whom resentment of her daughter's wilful marriage had prevented from soothing with kindness and creature-comforts the last days of her favourite child, considered perhaps that she had done enough for the widower by relieving him of a third of his domestic burthen; and for some time, she turned a deaf ear to the testimony of the nurse. But Mrs. Hatley knew how to reach a vulnerable point.

"As sure as you're alive, my lady," she resumed, "them young gentlemen, if not better looked after, will grow from bad to worse, and bring disgrace upon their family, my lady; and 'specially their poor, dear, blessed, innercent little sister, Miss Margaret, whom your ladyship's so proud on."

Such a denunciation startled even the imperturbable Lady Bournemouth. She had been

sufficiently shamed by the elopement of one of her two rigidly-reared daughters. It was time that something should be done to arrest the delinquency of the new generation. She had allowed her daughter to become a victim: she would at least prevent her grandsons from becoming scamps. Her limited jointure, (she assured herself, and Lady Milicent strongly confirmed the opinion,) did not admit of her placing them at a suitable school. But she would use her best exertions in their behalf. Since their poor inert father did not choose to attend to his duties, she would write to his brother, Lord Mildenhall; and represent to him that the boy who was presumptive heir to his title and estates was likely, in the interim, to become a rogue and a vagabond.

Write she did; just such a letter as long-winded dowagers indite out of the abundance of their arid natures; prolix, obscure, and eminently calculated to defeat its own object.

After working his way through its four diffuse pages, Lord Mildenhall had some right

to consider himself accused of starving his brother, and teaching his nephews to curse, swear, and play at hop-sotch. It was clearly made out to be his fault that the present incumbent of his best living—a living so fat that, from generation to generation, a son of the House of Mordaunt, *talis qualis*, was educated for the Church—possessed so hale a constitution. It was clearly made out to be his fault that the Honourable and Reverend Reginald, who, by the will of the late Lord Mildenhall, was to succeed him, still grovelled on, a curate.

The Viscount was exceeding wroth ; not (to do him justice) with the unoffending Reginald, but with the meddling dowager. To her, he addressed one of his stiffest, presenting-compliments letters ; stating that, “ having received no application from his brother for pecuniary assistance, he had no reason to suppose him in necessitous circumstances.” But the same post which conveyed this haughty reply, enlisted the services of a third person in behalf of poor Reginald and his boys.

Lord Mildenhall, if as wanting as his brother in energy and knowledge of the world, had found his deficiencies more strongly forced upon his admission by his responsibilities in life; and he was consequently one of those members of the highest class of society, who never act without the advice of a man of business. His solicitor, the keeper of his conscience as well as of his title-deeds, felt for him as well as thought for him. Whether to draw out a lease, issue an ejectment, or decide on the dowry of his daughters or pin-money of his Viscountess, the family solicitor was his unfailing authority. If he had preferment to give away, money to invest, or a ministerial appeal to evade, Wraxley and Lumm were to be consulted; or rather Wraxley by himself Wraxley; for the Co. of the concern in Gray's Inn had no existence for the Viscount. Wraxley, in short, was the master who had predominated over him from the day of their obtaining probate of the will of the late Viscount, to that in which his lordship now appealed to him for advice touching

the best and speediest method of affording relief to his brother.

The solicitor perfectly understood that by the "best," his noble client meant the cheapest. For he was a man who justified the confidence of his patron, by cautious care over the family resources; and though incapable of suggesting any measure obnoxious to the laws of the realm, or indeed of what is called "propriety," his notions were, perhaps, more strictly prudential than altogether became the coronet of his employer.

Such a man knew better than to propose granting an allowance, or even a gratuity, to the brother so inconveniently poor and absurdly prolific. Though the Mordaunt family had been pruned of its junior branches by climate and casualties, so that only two remained extant, he remarked that any undue act of liberality on the part of the Viscount might establish a dangerous precedent. He added, however, an extenuating alternative. "Mr. Mordaunt," he suggested, "having expiated by much privation

the imprudence of his early marriage in opposition to the advice of the best of brothers, and his precarious health and circumstances appearing to render urgent an extension of his income, he, Lord Mildenhall's humble adviser, presumed to suppose that an application to the Government so long supported in both the Upper and Lower House by his lordship's vote and influence, could not fail to procure for the curate of Bassingdon some profitable advancement in his profession."

No time was lost in acting upon advice so thoughtful; and a grateful Administration fully justified the solicitor's good opinion, by doing all, and more than all it was requested. The astonished Mordaunt was almost aghast at finding preferment steal upon him like a thief in the night; and lo! the two boys were forthwith invested in broadcloth and despatched to Eton, and the compunctions of the old nurse and the dowager set at rest.

Lady Bournemouth, indeed, went so far as to whisper to her daughter that it would not

much signify if the reverend rector of Mildenhall survived a few years longer. His successor presumptive was now amply provided for, and in circumstances to indulge in half a dozen new ailments.

CHAPTER III.

Sa nature, tendre et faible, n'avait d'autre force que celle d'inertie. Il n'opposa aucune résistance dans la lutte avec ses malheurs ; et laissa lâchement la vague passer sur lui.—LEBÈGUE.

SEVEN years of apprenticeship to good fortune now elapsed, without affecting any further change in the destinies of Lord Mildenhall's brother, save that of converting a melancholy prebendary into a grave archdeacon, and a grave archdeacon into a still graver dean. But even this aggrandisement did not render him a contented man. The chains of care had been worn, till they had corroded his very

nature. In spite of the blessings he enjoyed, Dr. Mordaunt still seemed to fancy himself the creditor of Providence.

On quitting Bassingdon, a spot replete with painful associations, he chose to believe that he could be happy in no other home ; and when his brother made it a condition of their reconciliation that the boys should be sent to a public school, Mordaunt, to whom their company had been as a millstone round his neck, complained fretfully of their loss.

“Poor fellows ! they had never been parted from him. He had taught them all they knew. He did not know how he should do without them.”

Even after his removal from his cheerless parsonage, to the savoury dinners and chirruping tea-parties of R——, where he was welcomed as became the brother of a viscount, and a well-looking widower, (little more than five and forty years of age, though in temperament and feelings threescore), he led almost as retired a life as in his obscure village. Camomile tea was a

beverage dearer to his digestion than the best of claret; and in the course of a year or two, he resigned himself and his dyspepsia into the hands of a solemn jesuitical-looking butler, who took care to bring on a fit of the gout whenever his Very Reverend master talked of a visit to Mildenhall Rectory, to which he had by this time succeeded; but where a highly-trustworthy curate ministered efficiently in his stead.

Even among those who believed in the infirmity of health proclaimed by the Dean and attested by the stillness and soberness of his habits of life, there were some who expressed surprise that his daughter, now a charming girl of seventeen, was not recalled from Hephanger to preside at the Deanery. But excuses were readily found. Dr. Mor-daunt was far too great an invalid to undertake the duty of introducing her into society; while Lady Bournemouth was of an age and temper to dislike any change in her establishment. Nor was Lady Milicent sorry to have her attendance on the peevish dowager lightened

by the company of the kind, pleasant-tempered girl, into which Margaret had progressed.

There was every reason, in short, why the young lady should remain quiet at Hephanger, and her father still quieter at the Deanery : every reason, except that Margaret herself was pining after the sympathies of younger companionship than a querimonious grandmother, and cross-grained aunt ; and that the Dean, though still personating to himself the part of chief mourner for the wife he had so long survived, was gradually losing all sense of paternal responsibility. The tears shed over the memory of Lady Mary had produced, like the drippings of the Knaresborough well, a fine petrification.

His eldest son, meanwhile, progressed slowly, at Eton, from a sullen fag into a tyrannic master ; and from the bully of a public school into an insolent fellow-commoner.

Overgrown and athletic, many of those who mistake sullenness for dignity, pronounced him to be a fine young man ; and among them,

luckily for himself, was his uncle Lord Mildenhall; who, when he found that nothing further was required of him in behalf of his nephews, called upon them one day at Eton, and received a high character of his elder nephew (who, as a sap, was a favourite with the head-master,) and to recognise in him a *fac simile* of the ungainly Mordaunt race.

From that day, he adopted him as a favourite, and invited him frequently to the Abbey. The Mildenhalls were advanced in years. The three daughters, of whom their family consisted, of whom one only remained single, were to divide between them the unentailed estates; while the honours and Mildenhall Abbey must descend to the Dean of R—— and his issue male; so that there was every reason for rejoicing that Reginald would represent them worthily in those moral and physical defects, which, at Mildenhall, passed for family features.

Thus estranged from the Deanery, and strengthening his worst qualities by companionship with a proud, cold, selfish race, the elder son gradually lost sight of his father and

brother. He was perfectly satisfied so to do. He preferred a spot where he was made more of than at R——. Nor was there a grain of sympathy, beyond the natural instincts of brotherhood, between him and Willy; who had been justly described to Lord Mildenhall on his memorable visit to Eton, as an idle, careless scapegrace, likely to prove a source of much anxiety to his friends.

Had the noble uncle pursued his inquiries in the Playing Fields instead of catechizing Dr. Keate, he would have heard another story; for Willy Mordaunt was one of the most popular fellows in the Lower School. He acquired, indeed, less distinction as a scholar than became his excellent abilities. For no one encouraged him—no one seemed to take pride in him—no Mildenhall Abbey awaited *his* holidays; and the Deanery at R—— was a positive purgatory to a boy of lively qualifications. Still, there was a chance that, like writings in sympathetic ink, his brilliant qualities might one day develop themselves under a genial glow.

The two young men had now attained the debateable ground trenching on manhood; a period pregnant with passions and perils, errors committed and habits contracted, which often cast their shadow before to overcloud the path of life. Yet their father had never mustered strength or energy to discuss with them their future prospects. It was chiefly through Wraxley and Lumm they had been made aware that Reginald was intended by his uncle to study the law, to qualify him for the representation of the family borough; and William to enter the Church, that he might hereafter succeed his father in the rich rectory of Mildenhall.

“If they get me into the Church, it will not be by fair means,” was the secret comment of the reckless William. “But sufficient unto the day be the struggle. To-morrow, the hounds meet at Walham Wood, and Dick Hargreave has lent me his bay mare. So here goes for the red coat, instead of the black! With such a friend as Dick to give me a lift (or a mount), I defy all the Dons of the University.”

Dissimilar in most points, the two young Mordaunts were unanimous in distaste for their cheerless home. The Deanery of R——, as constituted by the present resident, was in truth a dreary place. Situated in the corner of a gloomy quadrangle, in one of the dullest of cathedral towns, its granite arches and mullioned windows might have possessed a certain charm for eyes less accustomed to the venerable architecture of our collegiate institutions than those of Reginald and William. To them, the place was only Eton or Oxford—school or college—on a less pleasant footing. Harman, the solemn butler, and Mrs. Graves, the austere housekeeper, were a degree more reserved than even their uncommunicative master; and the jackdaws, perched on the parapet, were the only vocal creatures about the place.

The gloomy mahogany furniture and Turkey carpets, purchased by the Dean of his predecessor, on the accession of the latter to a mitre, muffled the rooms and corridors into the silence of the tomb. The very chimney-pieces were of

black or dark-gray marble ; and the pictures, portraits of sour-looking divines in gown and band, contained in massive walnut-wood frames. The windows were partially obscured by dim and cloudy stained glass.

In the sitting-room, the hangings were of olive-coloured damask ; and between their dingy draperies stood heavy bookcases, groaning under musty tomes of obsolete divinity. The peevish old servants seemed clothed in sackcloth and ashes ; speaking in under tones, which, though much resembling grumbling, purported only to propitiate the tympanum of the nervous Dean ; a man so enamoured of stillness, that he had cut down a venerable lime-tree abutting on his windows, because the rustling of the leaves, and the twittering of the birds they served to shelter, disturbed his reveries. The fragrance of its blossoms and freshness of its shade, pleaded nothing in its favour.

Such a home, after the tumultuous sociability of college life, was not likely to prove exhi-

larating. In spite of the augustness of his silk apron, the Dean, so dignified in the eyes of the Cathedral Close, and so interesting to the tea-tables of R——, was to his sons simply the “governor.” Even William, even “darling Willy,” though dutiful and affectionate, could not help feeling what were called his “holidays” to be both irksome and joyless.

Incapable of exertion, Dr. Mordaunt expected his sons to find pastimes for themselves. He made them a liberal allowance; and on their arrival at home, welcomed them kindly. But the slightest discord in the diocese—even the trifling agitation produced in R—— by the annual flower-show—affected his nerves so painfully, that the young men knew better than to molest him.

Reginald, indeed, conscious of his better prospects, had long determined on emancipating himself, at the earliest possible opportunity, from the parental authority which the Dean so little valued. He usually contrived to spend his Christmas vacation at Mildenhall Abbey,

instead of droning it away at the Deanery: a sad mortification to William, who had to bear his burthen in undivided weight.

It was in the second year of his Oxford life that he made his appearance at R——, in the midst of a heavy snow-storm, to find the Dean more than usually out of spirits:—overwhelmed by the petty squabbles of his Chapter, and the examination of Wraxley and Lumm's annual account. When cordially greeted by his cheery-hearted son, he shook his head despondingly, and declared himself to be “poorly—very, very poorly.”

Poorly, indeed, for a beneficed divine—a responsible Christian!—Beyond his physical sensations, he had not a thought or a care—beyond that gloomy room, not a sympathy. The souls entrusted to his cure, the progress of the faith he professed, of national civilization, of human happiness, of science, literature, art—what were such trifles to a man addicted to nervous headache, and engrossed by the daily study of Buchan's Domestic Medicine!—

Still, when seated in dignified abstraction in his stall, keeping measure with the responses of the choir, and looking like a portrait of St. Jerome by the tender pencil of Guido, there was plausible pretext for the affection with which he was pointed out to strangers as "the popular Dean of R——."

CHAPTER IV.

For what avail the largest gifts of Heaven

When drooping health and spirits go amiss?
How tasteless then whatever can be given!

Health is the vital principal of bliss,
And exercise, of health. In proof of this,

Behold the wretch who slugs his life away
Soon swallowed in disease's sad abyss.

While he whom toil hath brac'd, or manly play,
Has light as air each limb, each thought as clear as day.

THOMSON.

“WHAT on earth shall I say, by way of excuse, to Hargreave and Fanshawe!” mused the young Oxonian, as he sat brooding over the expiring embers of an old-fashioned grate,

ill-calculated to warm a chamber into which the sun had not penetrated since the days of Leland; the Dean having, according to his winter custom, swallowed at nine o'clock a basin of thin gruel; and at ten, scrupulously to a minute, retired to rest. "What reason can I possibly assign for not inviting them here, when they are coming to hunt so near us as Dursley Park? And after old Hargreave's splendid hospitalities to me at Oak Hill, during the yachting season! Yet I verily believe a visit from those two fellows would drive my poor old nervous father out of his wits! If I made the proposal he would not refuse. He seldom refuses. Opposition is too much trouble. But that sleek old Humblechunks, Harman, would contrive to convince him, before the time arrived, that he would not survive such a visitation!

"Better put the best face upon the matter, and write word at once to Fanshawe and Hargreave, that I find my father too great an invalid to render his house a pleasant sojourn

for young men—I must not say boys—one of whom, indeed, behaves like a child. Hargreave is too good a fellow to be affronted; and even Fanshawe will make a bad pun or two, and alter his plans.”

Never had the dulness of the Deanery struck him so disagreeably as at that moment. When he quitted it in September, the drone of the flies in the rarely-opened embayed windows, and the loud clicking of the old clock in the corridor, had nearly worried him into a fever. But now, with the wintry wind moaning elegiacally in the quadrangle over the departed lime-tree, and the sleet driving against the windows as strenuously as if discharging a duty, the loneliness of the place became insupportable.

His morning meal, next day, with the Dean, was not much more cheerful. A screen was interposed between the breakfast-table and the fire-place. Harman waited in list shoes upon his silent master. The morning papers were in process of being aired and ironed. Nothing was audible but the occasional crackling of the

coals, or of the dry toast languidly masticated by the Dean.

At length, several phthisicky hems apprised William Mordaunt that his father was about to address him.

“I must ask you, Willy, to write a letter for me after breakfast,” said the Dean. “My right hand feels a little uncomfortable. Harman has been advising a dose of Gregory’s mixture, for some days past. Under such circumstances, letter-writing is out of the question.”

“I shall be most happy, Sir, to officiate as your secretary.”

“I knew you would. I waited, in fact, for your arrival, to answer dear Margaret’s letter.”

“My sister?—you want me to write to my sister? My conscience reproaches me that I am myself a letter in her debt.”

“Yes! Margaret complains that you are a bad correspondent:—an additional motive, I presume, for her desire to spend part of the vacation with you here.”

“And does my grandmother consent? How

delightful! Nothing on earth should I enjoy so much!"

"My dear boy, the thing is totally impossible," said the Dean, taking a nail-file from his writing-table, and leisurely proceeding to polish his nails (one of the few bodily exertions he ever indulged in). "It was thoughtless enough of Margaret to propose it; but *you*, an eye-witness of my infirm state of health, must be aware of the utter impossibility of my receiving guests under my roof."

"But your own daughter, Sir!"

"My daughter is unfortunately as much a stranger to me as any other. To say the truth, William, I thought it both wise and considerate of Reginald to propose passing *his* Christmas at Mildenhall Abbey."

"Reginald was here in the summer, Sir, Margaret not for three years; nor have you even seen her in the interim."

"No fault of mine, William. Into Hep-hanger, you are well aware, I have never set foot since the day of my marriage. And the

last time Lady Bournemouth was able to spare your sister, the scarlet fever was raging at R——. As Harman observed, it would have been cruel kindness to accept Miss Mordaunt's company at such a time."

"But now, father,—there is no scarlet fever raging here *now*.—And it would be so delightful to have her with us!"

The Dean shook his head despondingly—almost reprovingly.

"If you knew," said he, in a querulous voice, "the overpowering headache to which I have been subject since my attack of influenza last autumn, you would perceive the impossibility of exposing myself to the society of a couple of noisy young people in the heyday of health and spirits. I should be quite unhinged. My establishment would be totally disorganized."

Conscious of the incursion of Picts and Scots he had been secretly meditating, in the persons of his Christchurch chums, Fanshawe and Hargreave, William, though vexed at his father's selfishness, could scarcely repress a smile.

“It would be so great a comfort to me, Sir, to see my sister again,” pleaded he, after as careful an examination of the crest on his teaspoon, as though it were the first time the family emblazonment had met his eye,—“that, since you are disinclined to receive her here, I will, if you please, make my way over to Hep-hanger, and—”

“My dear boy,” interrupted the Dean, “it is precisely because Lady Bournemouth and her daughter are about to leave home to spend a week or two at Bath, (your grandmother is getting into years, William, and had a very unpleasant hint of a paralytic attack last spring)—it is precisely because the family is about to leave home, I say, that your sister finds herself at liberty to visit the Deanery.”

“You are certain that Margaret does not accompany them to Bath?”—

“No, my dear. Lady Milicent appears to think that as her mother is laid up, and her niece has not yet been introduced into society, Margaret would be awkwardly situated in so gay a place.”

“Lady Milicent intends to immure my sister at Hephanger, till she grows an ugly, cross, peevish old maid, like herself!” cried William, angrily.

“Margaret may grow old, but she will never be either cross or peevish,” remonstrated the invalid, in so kindly a tone, as to encourage his son to renew his solicitations.

“She must lead a sad life, Sir, with those two peremptory old women,” said he, watching the countenance of the Dean. “My grandmother is fond of her, and liberal and kind; but Lady Milicent makes the poor girl pay dearly for every act of kindness on the part of the old lady. Lady Milicent is jealous and envious of my sister.”

“So she was of her own. So she was of my poor dear Mary!” murmured the Dean, the tears gathering in his eyes. “Yet Margaret always assures me she is happy at Hephanger.”

“You have not seen her, Sir, for years. Her letters have often led me, on the contrary to fear that, as she approached womanhood, she is

beginning to yearn for pleasanter company than that of two tiresome old ladies."

The demure Dean looked a little shocked, perhaps a little displeased.

"But since they have determined to leave my sister behind," resumed his son, "and you cannot receive her here, as she proposes, why shouldn't I spend the fortnight with her, at Hephanger?"

"Uninvited—and during Lady Bourne-mouth's absence? No, no, that would never do!" retorted the invalid, with more spirit than he had yet displayed. For, still resenting against the family of his lamented wife their unnatural conduct towards her, his pride rebelled against the idea that one of her children might be accounted an intrusive guest. "I cannot hear of your going to Hephanger, William; but since you and your sister have set your hearts on being together, this winter, let Margaret know that, in accordance with her request, my carriage and horses shall be at Homerton to meet her, at twelve o'clock on Friday next. I conclude I may rely upon Lady

Bournemouth to have her properly escorted thither."

"A thousand, thousand thanks, my dear father. She *shall* be properly escorted. I will go myself to fetch her!" cried William, hastening with such grateful impetuosity to seize the hand of the Dean, that the sedate invalid recoiled from his approach as from the attack of a highwayman. He was not accustomed to such exuberant demonstrations. The speed of a parliamentary train sufficed for all the movements of his heart or intellect.

CHAPTER V.

She never had in busie cities bin,

Ne'er warm'd with hopes, nor e'er alloy'd with fears ;
Not seeing punishment could guess no sin,

And sin not seeing, ne'er had use of tears.

Her sire with dear regard, her gifts doth wear

Of flowers which she in mystic order ties ;

And with the sacrifice of many a tear

Salutes her long-lost mother in her eyes.

SIR W. DAVENANT.

It were as pleasant a task to describe the beautiful girl who alighted from the dark-green chariot of Dean Mordaunt under the gloomy cloisters of R——, on the snowy Friday in question, as to paint “a rosebud on its dewy

stalk." But such descriptions are usually tedious to the reader ; who, if of the gentler sex, loves to suppose a heroine of her own "black, brown, or fair" complexion ; or if a man, prefers to invest the ideal beauty with the contour and colours of his lady-love.

Suffice it, therefore, that our Margaret was lovely, according to the severest rules of art ; and lovelier with the far more rare endowments of elegance and grace.

The spinster votaries of the handsome Dean, admitted that his daughter was worthy of him ; while the head verger of the cathedral protested that when Miss Mordaunt appeared in the aisle, it was as if one of the angels had stepped out of the altar piece. The nine thousand seven hundred and thirteen inhabitants of R——, were unanimous in her praises, with the single exception of her father. For in delicacy of feature, and gentleness of deportment, Margaret so painfully resembled the wife he had lost, that tears choked his utterance, whenever he attempted to pronounce her name.

Even the fractious, pampered servants were subdued into courtesy by the gracefulness of the young girl, who glided like a spirit of peace along the sunless corridors ; her white draperies, like those of Clarissa in her prison, diffusing light through the low-browed chambers.

Throughout the first evening, her brother sat gazing at her, her father pointedly away from her ; as though her presence had stirred the innermost fountains of their hearts.

By the time the Dean had despatched his basin of gruel and retired to rest, William had discovered that his sister was as pleasant to listen to, as to look at. She was so cheerful, so forbearing, so disposed to contemplate the bright side of things ! Like the princess in the fairy tale, her lips let fall only pearls and diamonds. In answer to Willy's sallies against the pompous, prosy old dowager from whom they had that morning parted, she cited a thousand anecdotes of Lady Bournemouth's benevolence. " Her death would be a sad loss to her dependants—a real calamity to the poor."

Though somewhat imbued with the ironical spirit of the age, William Mordaunt did not for a moment mistrust the sincerity of the panygerist. Suppressing his smiles, he replied only by a cordial pressure of her hand. It was comforting to learn that Margaret had been so kindly used at Hephanger. It was reassuring to know that, though Lady Milicent's jealousy of her young niece was too apparent, Margaret had suffered nothing from its influence; more particularly since, though sincerely attached to those by whom her life was made happy, her heart was still faithful to the dear brother Willy, with whom she had climbed the old elm-trees at Bassingdon, and shared the punishment awarded to the exploit.

He was perhaps the only person in R—— who experienced no surprise at the miracles accomplished by Margaret's arrival. For the Deanery was become an altered place, the Dean a new man. Instead of confining himself to his study, and breakfasting in his own room, he found legs to walk, a tongue to talk, and

ears to listen. Twice was his nightly gruel sent away untouched, because his daughter was reading aloud to him, in that sweet voice, trained by much practice to suit the dowagerly acoustics of Lady Bournemouth. He had even enquired of Harman on what day the bishop and his family were expected at the palace, for the Christmas holidays, with a minuteness denoting alarming projects of hospitality. Already, in spite of his detestation of letter-writing, he had addressed a few lines to Reginald, requesting him to hasten his return from Mildenhall Abbey. Not content with his own love and admiration of Margaret, he was evidently desirous that justice should be rendered her by every member of the family.

“It seems partial to say so,” he observed to his medical attendant, “but my daughter’s voice is so melodious that *her* conversation never fatigues me. After an airing with her, I feel really refreshed. So different from my solitary drives ! My Margaret’s cheerful looks and youthful animation seem to render me young again.”—

The autumnal flowers of the garden of life, the parental affections, were at length, though late, beginning to bloom for the Dean ; and the dependants who had brought themselves to respect his headaches and believe in his indigestions, were astonished to find that, when excited by natural emotions, their Very Reverend master could be as well and nearly as active as his neighbours.

One morning, however, the severity of the weather having peremptorily confined him to his fireside, his son and daughter endeavoured to nerve themselves against the frost by a bracing walk. On their return to the grim old porch, their cheeks glowing with exercise and their hearts with that goodwill towards all mankind which is the best dowry of youth, William vainly endeavoured to entice his sister back to some water-meadows adjoining the town, frozen over after a recent inundation, so as to form an excellent area for skaiting. They had found half the population of R—— assembled there, either as performers or spectators ;—and

William had returned to fetch his skaits ; nothing doubting that his sister would be unable to refuse herself the pleasure of witnessing his skill.

“ You *must* come and see me take the shine out of those bumpkins,” said he. “ You can remain on the bank, my dear Meg, with Mrs. Pleydell and her niece ; while I favour you with a double eagle, and a new flourish of my own particular invention.”

But Margaret was not to be persuaded. She had promised her father to be at home within the hour. The hoary turret-clock of the Deanery was appealed to ; and, lo ! its jangling voice seized the opportunity to make itself heard above the noise of the jackdaws, in confirmation of Miss Mordaunt's assurance that her leave of absence had expired.

While William, therefore, made his way, skaits in hand, along the slippery cloister leading to the suburbs, his sister slowly ascended the staircase whose heavy Axminster carpeting served to muffle all sound within doors, in a

spot secure from every species of disturbance from without. Her thoughts were absorbed in the busy scene she had quitted. She would have so liked to see her bold athletic "darling Willy," dashing along the ice among the rest!

So thoroughly was she engrossed by the picture her fancy had created, that she heard nothing of certain unusual sounds audible through the baized door of the sitting-room she was approaching; and she had turned the ebony handle, and was actually in her father's presence, before she discovered that, so far from fidgeting for her return, the Dean was engaged in conversation with a couple of strangers.

Another moment, and while a blush of surprise heightened the rich bloom already derived from the frosty air, her father presented his two visitors as "Mr. Fanshawe, Mr. Hargreave."

"Where is William, my dear? His friends here are anxiously expecting him," said the Dean.

Miss Mordaunt instantly proposed to despatch a servant, and recal her brother. But the young

men would not hear of it. "They would join their friend Mordaunt in the meadows. They had no idea that skating was going on at R——. They had driven in from Dursley Park, because all chance of hunting was knocked on the head; and had been in hopes of persuading Mordaunt to return with them, to dine and sleep."

Still, though they talked of going, not a step did either of them stir; and no sooner had Margaret laid aside her bonnet and taken a chair beside her father, than both the guests involuntarily resumed their seats. They had been cordially welcomed by the well-bred old Dean; who, but a short month before, would have been disposed to resent the intrusion of two young gentlemen whose united ages did not equal his own.—But he was now humanized.—The current of his blood flowed more freely; and the cooler of the two strangers, (between whom Margaret could only distinguish at present that one was dark, and the other fair,) had consequently some excuse for endeavouring

to explain to his friend's sister, what had been made perfectly clear to his friend's father previous to her arrival.

"When Mordaunt quitted Christchurch a fortnight ago," said he, "he promised to come and hunt with us at Dursley. Perhaps he was not then aware how much he should have to relinquish? He certainly omitted to enumerate a sister among the attractions of the Deanery."

From a peculiar glance which accompanied the inquiry, Margaret inferred that William was in the habit of describing his dreary home with less of filial reverence than was due to his *lares* and *penates*.

"My visit to R—— was unexpected," said she, so simply as to discountenance the implied compliment.

"Still, though disposed to make allowance for Mordaunt's change of plans," said the least forward of the two strangers, "we cannot afford to renounce his company without a struggle. He is a great favourite with the family at Dursley Park. Surely you will be kind enough

to sacrifice his society for a day or two, that so large a circle may not be disappointed?"

"Why not tell Miss Mordaunt honestly at once, that we can't get on without Willy, either for our own tennis, or Lady Hargreave's theatricals," interposed his friend. "Your son is our Admirable Crichton, Sir," he continued, "the mainspring which keeps us going. We can do nothing at Dursley without Mordaunt."

Even the unobservant Dean began to think it strange that, while one of his visitors affected to address him, and both to talk only of William, neither of them withdrew his eyes from the fair face of Margaret. They were, in fact, scarcely less startled than pleased at finding so lovely a creature in a spot where they expected only the grinning visages of corbels and waterspouts. A more worldly man than Dr. Mordaunt would have been instantly on his guard; but unaccustomed to play the paternal, it would have shocked him to connect ideas of conquest or match-making with the college-friends of his son. Without malice prepense,

however, he observed, in an all but valedictory tone: "My daughter's visit will terminate, I am sorry to say, in a week; after which, William will be at liberty to fulfil his engagements. In the interim, should the frost continue, you may perhaps find it convenient, gentlemen, to visit R—— again, and settle your plans with my son."

Both visitors evidently foresaw that it would be *particularly* convenient. But the alternative thus offered having been warmly accepted, nothing remained but to relieve the courteous old gentleman of their presence.

Even after their departure, though probably no foot so fearless as theirs had ever been set on his floor, and no voice so unsubdued beset his tympanum, the Dean found nothing to say against his guests.

"Two fine young men as ever I saw, my dear," said he; "acquaintances who do credit to my son. I wish, Margaret, they had not appeared so fond of fox-hunting—a dangerous and expensive pursuit. On that point, I trust,

your brother will abstain from following their example. Many things are permissible to the son of Sir Thomas Hargreave of Dursley Park, which, on the part of a young man intended for the Church, would be sadly out of place."

"Dursley Park? That fine old seat on the left bank of the river, between Homerton and R——?" inquired Margaret, with some interest.

"Precisely. William informed me some time ago that he had promised the Hargreaves a visit. He has often talked to me in high terms of his friend Dick Hargreave."

"Mr. Hargreave's manner is not so taking as that of his companion," observed Miss Mor-daunt, thoughtfully.

And the father and daughter were still busy with the comparison, when William made his appearance to be vexed by news of the visit. His first apprehension was, that his gay companions might have found cause for quizzing in his father's peculiar habits, and the home-

liness of his home. From this foolish fear, however, he was relieved by a single glance round the apartment. All was so decent, so thoroughly in accordance with the age and calling of the Dean, that the brilliancy of Oak Hill, and splendours of Dursley Park, faded in the distance. The gentlemanly bearing of the mild old egotist was as unimpeachable, as the graceful *naïveté* of his lovely child.

Mordaunt's next source of secret regret was of a graver kind;—reluctance namely, to expose that fair young sister to the admiration of men whose habits of life were far from immaculate; and whose liberty of speech exceeded even that of their conduct. “Hargreave and Fanshawe were excellent fellows; but he was sorry to find they had been invited to return to the Deanery. Margaret was so young—so inexperienced—so unprotected!—Under all the circumstances, Fanshawe was one of the last men on earth he could have wished to introduce to the acquaintance of his sister.”

CHAPTER VI.

Wit she hath, without desire

To make knowne how much she hath ;

And her anger flames no higher

Than may fitly sweeten wrath.

Reason masters every sense,

And her vertues grace her birth ;

Lovely as all excellence,—

Modest in her most of mirth.

W. BROWNE.

“THIS Mr. Hargreave, then, is brother to the Emma and Julia I have heard you speak of as such pleasant, accomplished girls?” inquired Margaret of her brother, that night, after the Dean had gruelled and retired to his room.

“Pleasant—yes. Did I say accomplished? Well, for want of a better word, I suppose I must stick to it. They certainly sing, play, ride, and dance better than most girls—better, dearest Margaret, than I ever wish to hear or see perform a sister of mine. They laugh and chatter to the right and left, as though their hearts were as empty as their heads; and give their opinions as freely as if those opinions were their own.”

“Willy, Willy!”—

“All which,” continued the young Cato, without noticing her interruption, “tends to render their father’s house agreeable to those who regard it only as a house of entertainment. But I have so often seen my friend Dick annoyed by their foolish flirting, that it has put me almost out of conceit of their pretty faces.”

“Mr. Hargreave, then, is perhaps what you understand by the word accomplished?”

“Dick Hargreave?—not a bit,—not the least in nature! Dick is a plain, practical,

straightforward fellow, a hater of humbug in all its branches; feeling deeply and acting honestly; but neither bookish nor fine-artish. Disposed, however, to take the world as he finds it, unless when his father and family render it disagreeable."

"In what way?"

"By hounding him on to distinctions for which he is unfitted, or fancies himself unfitted, or does not care to be fitted. The Hargreaves are new people. The father and uncle from whom Sir Thomas inherited his splendid fortune, rose from nothing; and the great ambition of the baronet is to efface the stigma by forming high connections, and accomplishing personal honours. He seems to want an apology for his thirty thousand a year."

"But why should that annoy his son?"

"Because Dick, like a wise fellow, is content to take the goods the gods provide him, and be thankful. Independent in mind, body and estate, why cudgel his brains, for instance, to obtain University distinctions? Sir Thomas has

been sulking with Dick for the last three terms, because he will not read for an honour."

"What better could he do? Surely wealth does not supersede the necessity for enlightenment?"—

"On the contrary, a position such as Hargreave's imposes duties on a man which *require* that his mind should be enlightened: but not by dry scholarship. Dick ought to see the world. Dick ought to travel. Dick ought to learn the art of making himself useful and agreeable. He is growing shyer and shyer every day."

"I saw no remarkable shyness in his manner this morning."

"He is more at his ease anywhere than in his father's house," replied William. "There, he knows they are lying in wait to criticise all he says and does. Sir Thomas is so bent upon making him a great man,—his sisters so determined that he shall be a man of fashion,—that I sometimes fear they will end by making him a brute."

"His friend, Mr. Fanshawe, does not seem likely to become a brute," said Margaret, stitching on diligently at her tapestry. "I never saw a finer countenance."

"Very handsome, is he not? Rawborne (our Oxford Phidias,) is always wanting to take a cast of his head. But Herbert Fanshawe is not easy to manage. Herbert does not eat out of every one's hand. Herbert is not good every day of the week!"

"You do not give a prepossessing account of the temper of either of your friends."

"Because, among friends, one is allowed to see the reverse of the tapestry. Besides, at our age, nature is apt to run riot. Young tempers, like young horses, want breaking. The world will put a collar round our necks, a bit in our mouths; and then, we shall jog on in harness like our neighbours."

"I am sure, Willy, *you* need no such discipline. I never saw you out of sorts in my life," said his sister, fondly.

"Don't make me out quite such a muff,

or I shall hate myself," cried her brother. "I promise you that after a row with old Snarforth, my tutor, I can be as brutal as the worst of 'em. But through life, my temper has had such easy elbow room, that it would have no excuse for turning out crooked. When my father was a poor man, he gave us our own way, because he had nothing else to give. When he grew rich, he added a handsome allowance, in order to make the way more pleasant. Then, at Lord Mildenhall's suggestion, (who was advised by his lawyer that it would be the means of extending the family connection,) he dispatched Regy to Cambridge, myself to Oxford; so that instead of the grudges and rivalry too often engendered between brothers, we meet, between Terms, far too unfamiliar to quarrel."

"Much too unfamiliar, I am afraid. Regy's answer to your last letter was far less affectionate towards both of us than I could wish."

"Regy is an odd fellow.—I can't quite

make him out. And Mildenhall Abbey is not the place to cultivate extraordinary expansion of the feelings. When he becomes his own master, I hope we shall understand each other better."

"But you are on good terms with him?" inquired Margaret, raising her eyes from her work.

"We have no grounds for collision. Parallel lines can't cross each other; and I certainly never go out of my way to traverse Regy's. It would cut me to the soul, however, if we two, who lived so happily together at Bassingdon, (didn't we Margaret? You must remember that, when you came to visit us, little spoiled darling that you were, with your Mrs. Hatley, and your frills and flounces!) it would vex me to death, I say, to fancy that Regy and I could ever become as cool to each other, as my uncle Mildenhall and my father."

"Lord Mildenhall is such a cold, proud, reserved man!"

"I don't suppose that at twenty, he was

proud, cold, or reserved. And I have noticed a marked change in Regy since he became the adopted of the Abbey. Between ourselves, Margaret, it is said the Mildenhalls want to marry him to their daughter."

"Have they still one single?"—

"The youngest, Anne Mordaunt,—two years older, however, than Reginald."

"And what sort of person?"

"When I was last at the Abbey, she was staying with one of her married sisters. At my previous visit, she was in the school-room."

"So that you know nothing about her?"

"Very little more. But I can't help fancying that, if she possessed superior attractions in addition to her five-and-twenty thousand pounds, the Mildenhalls would not think it worth while to pay such court to their heir presumptive, with a view to converting him into a son-in-law."

"Papa would scarcely like Reginald to marry so young?" said Margaret, thoughtfully.

"My father is the last person Regy is

likely to consult. Regy is far more the nephew of his uncle than a son of the Dean of R——."

Margaret was silent. The news her brother was communicating was far from welcome. Reginald was almost a stranger to her. An early marriage would probably estrange him from her for the rest of their lives; and she was unwilling to forfeit her stake in his affections.

The following day, on quitting the luncheon table, she found the Dean carefully examining through his spectacles a visiting card, which Harman had just deposited by his side.

"'Lady Hargreave,

The Misses Hargreave,

Dursley Park.'"

read he, aloud. "In my time, people were less scrupulously grammatical. In my time, it would have been Lady and the Miss Hargreaves, Dursley Park."

"Wrong there, Sir!" exclaimed his son,

who had just entered the room. "In your time, Dursley Park knew not Hargreaves. Dursley was then one of the Duke of Hereford's family seats. The Hargreaves were then cotton-spinning in Lancashire. The Hargreaves purchased Dursley of the Duke's trustees, within the last fifteen years."

"And to their credit be it spoken, my dear boy," mildly remonstrated the Dean. "Better the honest mechanic who has elevated himself in the world, than the spendthrift peer who despoils his children of the inheritance of their fathers," and, unconscious of having uttered a claptrap such as would have brought down three rounds of applause from the gallery of the Surrey Theatre, he proceeded to observe that "it was a very pretty attention on the part of Lady Hargreave to call upon the sister of the friend of her son."

"And the other card, papa?" said Margaret, pointing to one of larger dimensions, which still remained untouched on the silver waiter.

"The other, my love? Ay, ay! there is

another, I declare. Bless my soul! an invitation for you and William, for the 20th of the month: 'Lady Hargreave, at Home. Dancing, 10 o'clock.' "

"In your time, I suppose, Sir, it would have been eight?" said William, laughing.

But the Dean made no reply. His thoughts were divided between satisfaction at the compliment paid to his pretty daughter, and regret that any rational being—the mother of a family—the wife of a county member—should be thoughtless enough to issue cards for a ball, with the glass below zero, and the roads as slippery as glass.

"The 20th, I fancy, falls on Thursday next—six days hence," continued William, pursuing his own very different reflexions. "How lucky! We shall have a moon for our expedition."

"Our expedition?" repeated the Dean, aghast.

"Margaret will not leave us, Sir, this fortnight. My grandmother does not return to Hephanger before the 28th."

"But you surely do not suppose, William," interrupted the Dean, "that I would risk your sister's health—the health of a delicate young girl of eighteen—by exposing her to the inclemency of a winter's night, merely to acknowledge the politeness of Lady Hargreave?"

"Not merely for *that*, my dear father. But to afford her a pleasure she has so few opportunities of enjoying."

"William! your thoughtlessness shocks and alarms me," remonstrated the Dean. "A cold caught at this time of year, infallibly ends in cough; and a Christmas cough is proverbially said to last till Easter!"

"I will take excellent care of her, Sir. I will not allow her to catch cold!" cried William, glancing fondly at his sister.

"But even if you succeeded in satisfying papa's misgivings, Willy," said Miss Mordaunt, who was still examining the card of invitation, "this ball would be out of the question. It was because Grandmamma and Aunt Milicent considered it impossible for me to appear in

society without having been presented at Court, that they did not permit me to accompany them to Bath."

"Grandmamma and Aunt Milicent are a couple of —" he paused. The epithet was fitter for the atmosphere of Ch. Ch. than for the Deanery of R——. "I don't see what voice they have in the business," he resumed, somewhat less energetically, "if my father consents to your going."

"But he does *not* consent," said Margaret, unable exactly to interpret the smile that played on the wan face of the Dean.

"If I felt sure," said he, in answer to her implied interrogative, "that you would not over-fatigue yourself with dancing, and that William would see you properly wrapped up on leaving the house, I really think that, with a hot-water bottle in the carriage, and the fur basket for your feet—"

"Dearest Papa!"

"One might venture to accept the invitation."

With the usual contrariety of human nature, no sooner did the Dean exhibit symptoms of relenting, than William's former disinclination that his sister should be exposed to the bantering of his Oxford chums, recurred to his mind.

"After all, Sir," said he, "you probably judged wisely. Margaret is certainly young to appear in a large assembly under such chaperonage as mine."

"Of course, my dear boy. I never dreamt of such a thing. If Margaret goes, it must be under the protection of my friend Mrs. Pleydell, an unfailing guest at Dursley Park."

"That tiresome, toadying woman!" muttered William, regardless that the shovel hat of her husband the Archdeacon of R—— ought to be her protection. But the Dean heard him not.

He was reflecting that, though his daughter appeared so little anxious for the ball at Dursley Park, the time was come when she should be seen and admired. And was it not in the appointed order of things that Margaret should

become the idolized Mary of some heart as devoted as his own? The same ideas which to William were repulsive, assumed a sentiment of solemn grace in the mind of her father.

Unless Margaret expressed a decided objection, therefore, or Harman suggested an insuperable obstacle, the Dean determined, as resolutely as he could determine anything, that his daughter should accompany Mrs. Pleydell.

The weather seconded his intentions. The same thaw which enabled William to join his young friends at the covert-side, sustained the projects of the Dean. Mrs. Pleydell, certain of being doubly welcome at Dursley as the chaperon of the beautiful daughter of the popular Dean of R——, was eager in acceptance of the proposed trust; and having with some difficulty persuaded him that the danger of a cold from the simple white muslin dress, in which Margaret proposed to appear, was a peril braved and survived every winter by legions of young ladies, all was finally arranged, and Margaret was easily

reconciled to her fate. Miss Esther Pleydell, the spinster niece of the Archdeacon, visited the Deanery daily, with hints and instructions; and even Willy, when he found the invitation accepted, began to interest himself in the fitting of the white gloves, and the skill of his sister's *en avant-deux*.

The Dean's solitudes were of a different nature. Lamb's-wool socks and a box of Tolu lozenges were the chief preparations he suggested for the *début* of his daughter. The weather-glass, not the looking-glass, was the authority he required her to consult.

CHAPTER VII.

Let a broad stream with golden sand
Through all his meadows roll,
He's but a wretch, with all his land,
Who hath a narrow soul.

WATTS.

Most people have seen a London ball ; and those who have seen *one*, have seen a thousand : the same blaze of light, the same band of music, the same supper tables, the same tumult at the door, and crowd upon the staircase ; the same weary hostess curtsying to strangers, the same peevish dowagers wrangling in the cloak-room, the same ubiquitous

youngest ensign in the Guards asking for every one's carriage; the same hoarse link man reiterating the same names.

But a country ball is a very different affair. A country ball is not a vapid *fac simile* of its predecessor. A country ball is not given merely because, for the last twenty years, Lady Hailsham has sent out cards as systematically as the parish waits send in theirs after Christmas. It is given by one county family because a son is born; by another, because a daughter is married; by a third, in honour of a successful candidature for Parliament; by a fourth, because the family mansion has been re-decorated; by a fifth—but the enumeration might stretch till the crack of doom.

The ball at Dursley Park implied a combination of these motives. The Hargreaves, new people in the county, were ambitious of ingratiating themselves with the old. The father of Sir Thomas had succeeded to the enormous property of an elder brother—a Lancashire manufacturer—in consequence of the accidental

death of his only son, at a period of life when it was no longer possible to bestow upon his children the education essential to their new position in life ;—his son, the present baronet, being already married to the daughter of a neighbouring cotton-spinner, who was still more in awe than himself of the greatness thrust upon them. But twenty years of opulence had by this time tolerably re-assured them ; and the routine of parliamentary life and the baronetcy (ayed out of a grateful administration) which, if it did not elevate him to the rank of those he aspired to equal, raised him at least above the level of his late uncle and father,—had served to convert Sir Thomas Hargreave into a very tolerable representative of an extensive county property.

Had there been in the market, at the period of his purchasing Dursley, an estate equally attractive situated in a county shared amongst aristocratic proprietors, his position would have been more advantageous. As yet unversed in the habits and prejudices of society, the

Hargreaves had fancied it a recommendation to their new residence, that not a family of rank was established within five and twenty miles. But experience soon taught the elder branches, that, by neighbours of established precedence, they would have been better received, than by landed gentry jealous of their intrusion and envious of their luxury of wealth. In a noble circle, their personal value would have been more liberally estimated. The vote of Sir Thomas, and his power of commanding the ear of the House on questions of mercantile interest, would have secured him due consideration from those of whom the House is the banker.

Fifteen years wasted in endeavouring to propitiate the "county families" had, in fact, convinced both the husband and wife of their error in congratulating themselves, during their first winter at Dursley, that the only peer on their visiting list was a spiritual one—the Lord Bishop of R——. They would have preferred the loftiest duke or duchess in the land, to the supercilious Mr. and Mrs. Brampton Brylls of

Bryllholm Place, whose rookery croaked them into the blue devils whenever the wind was easterly.

For many years, Mrs. Brampton Brylls and her son, when they arrived in their old-fashioned chariot, drawn by plough horses in plated harness, whereof the copper rims, were as apparent as those of Moses Primrose's green spectacles, to dine at Dursley, contrived to make poor Mrs. Hargreave as thoroughly ashamed of her massive plate and costly furniture, as though their splendour concealed a crime ; and in the damp mildewed parlour at Bryllholm Place, she actually trembled when she first heard herself announced as "Lady Hargreave." The pinched mouth of the widow of an estated esquire of twenty descents, would, she foresaw, sneer her back into plebeianism.

Later still, when extended intercourse with the London world had enlarged her horizon, and the connections formed by her gentlemanly son and accomplished daughters had inaugurated the whole family into a higher and pleasanter

mode of existence, the half-educated parvenue mother remained uneasily at odds with her velvet ottomans and damask hangings. During the absence of her husband and children, it was her delight to pry into details of domestic economy, unmeet for her interference ; and the new Lady Hargreave had been more than once put to the blush, surprised by the upper-housemaid with a duster in her hand.

On state occasions, however, her dress and deportment fully equalled the requirements of the lady paramount of Dursley ; and by the liberality of their hospitality, the Hargreaves had gradually established themselves in general favour. The best families from all sides of the county sought introductions to them ; and unless they managed to injure this growing good-will by undue pretensions, they were likely to go down to their graves as creditably, as though born to the escutcheons created by their family industry.

When Lady Hargreave rustled forward in all the resplendence of her diamonds, blue satin,

and affability, to welcome the daughter of the Dean, presented to her by Mrs. Pleydell, Margaret thought she had never beheld a more august personage; and though, after a few minutes conversation, it occurred to her that there was far more dignity in her dry meagrely-attired grandmother, Lady Bournemouth, it was impossible to deny that the lady of Sir Thomas Hargreave corresponded admirably with his over-gilded ceilings and over-illuminated hall. To no one of the three hundred persons assembled by their hospitality, did the Hargreaves do the honours of their house more graciously than to Margaret Mordaunt. Aware, per favour of Burke's Peerage that the Dean of R—— was heir presumptive to the ancient Viscounty of Mildenhall, they took for granted that the son with whom their own had formed so close an intimacy at Oxford, was his eldest and heir; and the secluded habits of the Dean having frustrated all attempts at acquaintance-ship, they held it a happy chance which opened a door of approach.

The only drawback to their satisfaction arose from the perversity of their son. Dancing had not commenced when the Pleydell party made its appearance; and Margaret was, by birth as well as beauty, entitled to precedence. But Dick Hargreave would not hear of inviting her to open the ball.

"You know I detest dancing, mother," he remonstrated. "It is quite out of my way."

"But you are engaged to Elinor Maitland?"

"Yes—as an old friend—to go down a country-dance some time or other in the course of the evening. Not to make my awkwardness conspicuous by drawing general attention. Let one of my sisters open the ball with Fanshawe."

"But the neighbourhood, my dear Dick!—The neighbourhood, and especially the R—— people, will expect some mark of attention to be shown to the Mordaunts."

"Then let Emma open the ball with my friend Willy. Don't waste time, mother, in

endeavouring to persuade me. I have made up my mind not to stir a step till after supper."

With a sigh such as corpulent, well-laced matrons heave over the rebellion of their offspring, Lady Hargreave moved off to make the arrangement suggested ; and her son, who, pounced upon by a chaperon with daughters to dispose of, relieved himself between the period of an elaborate prose by watching the opening quadrille, found cause, perhaps, to repent his obduracy, when he noticed the almost painful timidity of the partner he had rejected. Poor Margaret's frequent change of colour could not be altogether ascribed to the blunders of the hobbledehoy son of her chaperon, Mrs. Pleydell, assigned to her as a partner. Her embarrassment arose from the annoyance of finding herself the object of universal attention.

Scarcely was the dance at an end, when her brother's friend, the showy, handsome, fashionable Herbert Fanshawe, while engaging her

hand for the second quadrille, increased her distress by assuring her with all the ardour apprehended by her brother, that she was the cynosure of the evening.

“When I saw my friend Willy retreat into the conservatory just now,” said he, “I fancied (forgive me) that he was afraid of witnessing your want of experience in an art where it is not alone ‘*le premier pas qui coûte.*’ You dance, as you look, like an angel.”

At which impertinent compliment, Margaret’s complexion varied no longer ; but became permanent crimson.

Great was her relief when her brother approached the group, near which they were standing. William, she was certain, would not countenance such flightiness.

“You have got over your alarms now, darling?” said he, kindly. “You will now begin to enjoy yourself.”

Thus encouraged, her spirits revived. The Miss Hargreaves seemed to understand that it was a graceful act to devote themselves to the

new beauty by whom they were so completely eclipsed ; and their attentions thoroughly atoned for the singular neglect with which she was treated by their brother.

“ Why have you not danced with that beautiful girl ? ” inquired Elinor Maitland of him, as they sat together between the pauses of the long waited-for country dance.

“ Because I hate dancing, except with an old friend like yourself,” said he, addressing a plain answer to the plain girl ; the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, with whom, in earlier years, he had been a pupil.

“ You dance with me from good nature ; because you know I am not otherwise likely to stand up. But Miss Mordaunt is in all respects so suitable a partner—”

“ So my mother has been dinning into my ears for the last three hours ! Had they let me alone, I should naturally have asked her. Willy Mordaunt’s sister, and a stranger here, she is entitled to every civility, even if less pretty and pleasing. But my family seem to take

pleasure in harassing me into doing disagreeable things. If you knew what it was, Elinor, to be told from morning till night that you have a part to play in the world ;—that this, that, and the other is *expected* of you :—”

“ But you *have* a part to play in the world.”

“ The part of a gentleman, like Fanshawe, or Mordaunt, or any other young fellow of my acquaintance ; whose parents are not eternally bothering them about the connections they are to make, or the rank of the young lady they are to dance with.”

Elinor Maitland smiled. The heir of the house had evidently been reprimanded by his mother and sisters for selecting her as a partner. But so simple was the nature of her intimacy with young Hargreave, that she was indifferent to the imputation.

“ Come, come !” said she, good-humouredly, “ you have done your duty to your tutor’s daughter. Why slight the sister of your friend ? Relent in your own favour, and go and dance with the prettiest girl in the room !”

Though half ashamed to own it, Dick was never more inclined to be persuaded. He recollected how courteously he had been welcomed to the Deanery. It even glanced into his mind that Margaret had blushed a little on seeing him again. At length, as if touched by the remonstrance of his sensible companion, he rose from his lounging attitude by her side ; took his hands from his pockets, and proceeded in search of the Pleydell party, with intentions which would have rejoiced the heart of his parents.

But he was too late. Already, they were cloaked for departure. The family coach (including the furred basket and hot water bottle) was at the door ; and the hobbledehoy son had the happiness of escorting Miss Mordaunt to it, leaving Miss Esther Pleydell to the charge of the heir of Dursley Park !

“ Good night, Hargreave ! ” cried William Mordaunt, as he hurried in after them ; and his conscience-struck friend could not help fancying there was an inflexion of pique in his voice.

CHAPTER VIII.

Whose was the gentle voice, that, whispering sweet,
Promised methought long days of bliss sincere ;
Soothing it stole on my deluded ear
Most like soft music.

BOWLES.

ALREADY vexed by learning from his demure housekeeper, Mrs. Graves, that his daughter had declined a basin of her celebrated gruel on her return from the ball, the Dean was not altogether satisfied with the account rendered to him by William, as they breakfasted together the following day. By persevering interrogatories, he contrived to extract from his son that Margaret had sat in no draughts, and indulged in no iced

refreshments. On the other hand, he thought it almost superfluous when Willy volunteered the information that his sister was the best dressed and most attractive girl in the room. How could it be otherwise?—Was she not the child—nay, was she not the image, of his idolized Mary?—

“Had you been a little older, William,” said the Dean, in a low voice, “when you lost your dear mother, you would no longer wonder at your sister’s beauty.”

Touched by the deep emotion so foreign to the undemonstrative invalid, William remained silent during the remainder of their meal. But his cogitations were far from agreeable. He had accidentally overheard a remark, amid the crush of the ball-room the preceding night, that “young Hargreave would make a famous catch for the Dean of R——’s handsome daughter;” and, indignant at hearing his sister’s name for the first time thus familiarly cited, he felt susceptible uneasy lest some encouragement unwittingly afforded to the attentions of his

friend Dick, should have given grounds for supposing that she or her family entertained projects of the kind. If at the moment the impertinent suggestion reached his ear, he could have approached the unsuspecting girl, he would have suggested that, if possible, she should decline dancing with Hargreave.

But on finding that no such alternative had been afforded her, he was absurdly displeased. The indignity offered, could not proceed from the heads of the house; for Sir Thomas and his portly moiety were marked in their encouragement of *his* attentions to their daughter Emma: while flirting with whom, in a bower of evergreens in the ante-room, Lady Hargreave had passed with an approving nod. His quarrel therefore was with Dick. But might not Margaret have been in fault?—Had she not too openly smiled upon Herbert Fanshawe's flighty attentions?—

He did not care to interrogate her on the subject. It seemed indelicate to discuss such topics with one so young. But he began to

regret that he had not more strongly opposed his sister's appearance at the Dursley *fête* ; and still more, that her foolish chaperon should be entitled to talk over Miss Mordaunt's triumph or failure, with the rest of the vulgar gossips of R——.

His meditations soon found other matter and other method. Within a few days of the Dursley ball, his sister was conveyed back in the dark-green chariot to Homerton, to await the dowager carriage which was to re-transport her to Hephanger ; and the Deanery reverted to its former gloomy stillness. "Darling Willy" was forced to have recourse to the covert side and hard riding, to solace him for the loss of his gentle companion.

The eyes of the poor Dean were noticed to become unusually red of an evening, after the departure of his child. It might be that, missing Margaret to read to him, he was forced to strain them by poring over books and newspapers. It might be that he was beginning to freshen the recollection of the

pleasant days which Margaret had enabled him to pass, with the same showers which once bedewed the memory of his beloved Mary. At all events, the bottle labelled "Camphor Julep" in his favourite medicine-chest, was, just then, oftener despatched to the chemist's for replenishment, than at any earlier period.

There was nothing to replace the loss he had sustained. Willy was forced to return to Christchurch; and Reginald proceeded straight to Cambridge from Mildenhall Abbey. Except that Mrs. Pleydell and her elderly niece occasionally forced their way into his solitary cell, to tell him the wind had changed, and inquire what news from Hephanger, nothing from without disturbed the monotonous torpor of his life.

Sir Thomas Hargreave, indeed, made it his duty to wait upon the Dean of R—— previous to quitting Dursley for town at the meeting of Parliament; to thank him, as he said, for having permitted his son and charming daughter to join their family circle. But the

mild hypochondriac recoiled from the expansiveness of the prosperous baronet. A man who had gone through his probation at Basingdon Parsonage, shrank from the rampant worshipper of Mammon, who seemed to recognize no motive of human action but gold. Beneath his ostentatious philanthropy, the Dean discovered a vein of iron. He doubted not that, in spite of Lady Hargreave's diamonds and gorgeous furniture, she was a miserable woman. Sir Thomas made no mystery of his slave-driving propensities. At Dursley, he was absolute lord and master; at Dursley, *l'état c'était lui*.

The mild Dean, whose will was woven as it were of lambswool, regarded with awe the active, self-asserting, arbitrary man, whose whole life appeared to form an act of government. Unable to maintain his own authority over so much as his butler, he looked upon Sir Thomas Hargreave as almost an institution.

Poor Margaret, meanwhile, found on her return to Hephanger, that she had undergone

the usual fate of the absent. Lady Bournemouth had learned that she could dispense with her company ; nay, that if

Crabbed age and youth
Cannot live together,

still less can infirm age abide the presence of healthful girlhood. Lady Milicent had not lost an opportunity since they parted of making it clear to the dowager, that their temporary release from the responsibility of guardianship and chaperonage, had proved of serious advantage to her health. Paralytic and fractious, Lady Bournemouth could no longer bear either sound or movement. Music in the house was out of the question. Even the rustling of a newspaper or silk dress, disturbed her nerves. Margaret's favourite dog was banished. Her cheerful voice must sink into a whisper. The Deanery itself was a lively spot compared with Hephanger.

It was not, however, on that account that Margaret pined to return to the roof

of her father. She had now tasted the ineffable sweetness of home; of sitting by a fireside where she was not grudgingly entertained; of being gazed upon from morning till night with looks of love. She would probably have expressed these sentiments as strongly as they were felt, either to the Dean himself, or to her brother; had she not perceived that if her company and attendance were less welcome than formerly to the grandmother by whom her infancy had been sheltered, they were far more necessary. Lady Milicent was a jealous guardian, rather than a tender nurse; and Lady Bournemouth would have been often left to grumble alone, while her austere daughter was engaged in spiritual conference with a canting Scotchman, a certain Gabriel Macwheeble, D.D.—lean and perpendicular as a way post, and the popular lecturer of a West end chapel;—who, after alternately fawning upon, and anathematizing the wealthy dowager and her daughter during their residence in London, within reach of the tyranny of his

ministry, had found it worth while to establish himself in the neighbourhood of Hephanger, and even escort his fair penitents to Bath ; had not Margaret, at such moments, stolen into her grandmother's dressing-room, to replace the reluctant attendance of her morose waiting-maid, Mrs. Marvyn.

"I cannot leave her, helpless as she is. She might want me—she might miss me—if I obtained permission to return to R——," mused Miss Mordaunt, while watching beside the arm-chair of the infirm woman. "I should be wretched if I thought she was neglected ; and Aunt Milicent seems every day more and more engrossed by that canting man who rules the whole house. No ! I *must* not leave grand-mamma. Till her faculties were impaired, she loved me dearly—I must not desert her *now*."

If the reveries of the young girl occasionally wandered from the sick room in which she was an unnoticed watcher, to the scarcely less cheerless parlour at the Deanery, occasionally brightened, or at least *once* brightened by pleasant

visitors, or to that brilliant ball-room where the kindly voice and handsome face of her brother's friend had cheered away her shyness and initiated her into the pleasures natural to her age, the peril was wholly her own. Her often-renewed recollections of Herbert Fanshawe, with his expressive eyes and pleasant accents, never interfered with her zealous attendance on the invalid.

It certainly did not detract from the pleasure with which the letters of darling Willy were welcomed, that there occasionally appeared in a postscript "Fanshawe and Hargreave desire to be remembered to you ;" or "Hargreave talks of shirking his degree ; which would probably cause a lasting feud between him and his father ; who, making him a splendid allowance, fancies himself entitled to passive obedience in return. Herbert Fanshawe, on the contrary, is sapping like a good one ! I look on him as booked for a double first. To be sure, in *his* case, it is of more consequence."

Margaret did not understand *why* : but since

William thought so, he must be right. All she opined concerning Herbert Fanshawe, or his prospects, was that he was the son of a Sir Something Fanshawe; and that, superior to young Hargreave in person and address, he was probably his superior in all things. It was not for her guilelessness to surmise that the Sir Something Fanshawe, instead of being a wealthy baronet, was a K.C.B., whose red riband and diplomatic pension were all that his cousin german, the Duke of Merioneth, had been able to obtain for him in guerdon of his services; and that Herbert, like his father before him, must work his own way in the world.

In such girlish musings, the winter wore itself away; the fancies engendered by a single day of pastime having melted in common with the icicles of the season.—By the time the spring days began to warm themselves in brighter sunshine, the thoughts of Margaret, like the glades of Hephanger, wore a more auspicious aspect. The thrushes were tuning up their mellow song; the fruit-blossoms had

already shed their snowy showers ; and the poor old Countess, brightening in her turn, was talking of resuming her airings. And could Margaret venture just then to petition for a summer visit to her father ?—

One evening in May, she had been devoting her afternoon to the sick woman ; seeing that it was the third day of the week, set apart, as well as the sixth, by Lady Milicent and Dr. Macwheeble, for inflicting their visitations upon the neighbouring poor ; so that the duties of nurse were shared for hours between Margaret and Mrs. Marvyn ; who executed *her* share by sitting in an arm-chair in the adjoining room, dozing over serious books and serious sewing. Margaret felt more than usually cheered by the aspect of the shrubberies, as she saw them from the window, with their intermingled masses of lilac and gold ; as well as by the evensong of the birds, which reached her faintly from a distance.

Even Lady Bournemouth was in a more benign mood than her wont. Lady Bourne-

mouth twice called her "dearest Margaret," as in better times; and had even selected as a present for her, from the innermost recesses of an ebony cabinet which was sometimes placed on the table before her to rummage in, like a child's baby-house, a pair of old-fashioned garnet bracelets; their clasps being embellished with faded miniatures of Lady Mary and Lady Milicent Bourne, in their childhood, attired in broad blue sarsnet sashes and beaver hats.

The old lady was evidently refreshed in body and soul by the influence of the weather; and having kissed her withered hand in token of gratitude for her generosity, her granddaughter retired, with the bracelets clasped upon her arms, to a distant seat; prepared to read away the time till the return of her aunt enabled her to saunter into the grounds, and enjoy a breath of the delicious air systematically excluded from that stifling chamber.

At length the poor dowager, weary of her toy, turned the key in the lock of the cabinet; reclined back in her easy chair, and fell asleep;

whereupon Margaret rose and drew down the holland blind, that the light of the setting sun might not molest her. In passing on tip-toe beside her chair, she noticed with satisfaction that a smile had overspread the old lady's face, as though she enjoyed pleasant dreams.

The door opening from the dressing-room into the room where Mrs. Marvyn sat hemming one of her interminable strips of muslin, was ajar; so that Margaret, finding Lady Bournemouth set in for her regular evening doze, had no hesitation in stealing out of the sick chamber, lest the deepening twilight should debar her of all chance of a walk. She was aware that, now the nightingales were in song, and the hawthorns in bloom, the antiquated couple whose philanderings had so plausible a pretext, would probably make their way home from the village, through the coppices, twice as long as in less propitious weather.

Having emerged through a glass door into the garden, such a gust of summer fragrance burst upon her senses, as seemed almost intoxi-

cating. It was a delicious evening. The glow of sunset still brightened the sky, and the incense of a thousand flower-beds saluted its parting brilliance. Margaret lingered on the elastic turf, lingered beside the variegated borders which, at that prolific season, every passing hour endows with beauty and change. Her bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne. She felt almost *too* happy. Youth glowed in her veins. Cheerfulness swelled in her heart. The moths flitting in the twilight amid those summer flowers, the bees hovering their golden way back to the hive, were not lighter on the wing. If, at that moment, her thoughts glanced towards the renowned gardens of Christchurch, with their quivering lime-trees and glassy waters, let us hope that it was darling Willy, alone, who piloted their way.

Grievous that these soothing summer hours should be as transient as enchanting! The sweetest flowers dispense but the perfume of a moment! The song of the nightingale melts into silence. The twilight glow subsides into

the gloom of night. The realities of life assert their ascendancy; and care, grim care, overmasters the chirping of the cricket, and the murmur of the bee. Margaret soon heard herself summoned back to the house. Servants were seeking her in the shrubberies. Lady Milicent, returned from charity-mongering with the Doctor, was displeased at her absence.

Prepared for a reprimand, she groped her way up the dim staircase towards the apartments she had so lately quitted. Already, lights were placed there; and unusual sounds issued from the rarely-opened door. Servants of all kinds seemed crowding into a chamber, on most occasions sacred from intrusion; and an angry voice predominated over their murmurs.

Gliding hastily into the room, Margaret beheld Lady Milicent still attired in her bonnet and shawl, gesticulating vehemently, and uttering lamentations and execrations, mingled with the shrillest outcries.—Her own name was involved in the latter;—in the former, that of

her grandmother. Yet the poor old lady sat reclining unmoved in her chair, as though her slumbers defied even the rabid animosity of her daughter. And well they might;—for alas ! that heavy sleep was the sleep of death !—

“This is your doing, Margaret Mordaunt;” cried the excited Lady Milicent, the moment her eyes caught sight of her horror-stricken niece. “Yes ! you have killed your grandmother. She forgave all your mother’s wickedness ; she loved you, and cherished you, like her own child. And in return, you have murdered your benefactress.”

Involuntarily, the servants in attendance turned towards their young lady ; in utter amazement at the charge thus solemnly enounced.

But to their surprise, she gave no sign of having so much as heard the frantic accusations of her aunt. Already, she was on her knees beside the chair of Lady Bournemouth ; imprinting hurried kisses upon the hands that hung nerveless, but still warm and unstiffened,

by her side as is the case when life hath departed, and death not yet affixed a firm grasp upon his prey.

"Has any one been sent for? There may yet be hope!" cried Margaret, addressing Mrs. Marvyn, who was mechanically smoothing the pillow of the deceased.

"Dr. Macwheeble's been sent for, Miss Mordaunt. Dr. Macwheeble will be here in a moment," faltered the panic-stricken woman.

"No, no! a physician. Send off a man and horse to Mr. Robinson," cried Margaret. "If he is not at home, an express to Dr. Maunsell."

She was interrupted by the sonorous voice of the D.D. endeavouring to silence, with appropriate texts, the wild clamour of Lady Milicent, and requiring her to withdraw from the chamber. Having succeeded in removing her, he returned after a time, and in a tone of authority desired all present to quit the room; except Mrs. Marvyn, who, as the personal attendant of the late Countess, would remain in possession

of the body till the arrival of the medical men, to examine into and attest the causes of death.

Margaret's first impulse was to resist. She felt that her place was by the side of the dead. But Dr. Macwheeble spoke with such severity, that to provoke a contest with him would have been unbecoming the time and place. They were not on friendly terms. He had found her an obstacle to his uncouth courtship ; and judged her likely to impinge upon the inheritance of Lady Milicent Macwheeble. Still the Doctor was not weak enough to attribute to her, by an act of either omission or commission, the recent fatal event ; and as a daughter of the future Lord Mildenhall, a beneficed member of the Church, Miss Mordaunt was entitled to decent respect.

In detailing to the professional men, who soon hovered like vultures over Hephanger, the cause of their patient being alone when she breathed her last, he accordingly described Lady Milicent as having been engaged elsewhere in acts of good

Samaritanism towards her mother's tenants; and Margaret as a thoughtless girl, who had neglected her duty in pursuit of childish pastimes.

It did not much matter. A Dowager Countess, in the enjoyment of a handsome jointure and country seat, may die as suddenly as she pleases, without much fear of the interference of the County Coroner; and when the first startle of the moment had subsided, the death of one so infirm, in the full ripeness of years, was pronounced by general consent to be a merciful deliverance.

CHAPTER IX.

Let's talk of graves, and worms, and epitaphs.

SHAKESPEARE.

MARGARET remained at Hephanger till after the funeral. Not that she was permitted to attend her grandmother to the family vault. Lady Milicent decided that the appearance of females at such ceremonies was an indecent innovation ; and having, from the day of their common bereavement, given publicity to her marriage, (which had long been a secret only to her mother and niece,) the demure D.D. had forthwith taken upon himself the domination of the establishment.

The result was, that the sentiments of horror, instinctive in every human breast at the first aspect of death, had been, in Margaret's case, deadened by the influence of a thousand personal vexations. The animosity of her aunt towards herself, and the indignant rebellion of the old servants against the strange master set over them, converted the house of mourning into a house of dissension. To determine Lady Bournemouth's wishes concerning her mode of interment, her will had been sought for; and, as is not unusually the case with superannuated dowagers, *two*, nay, two and a-half, were discovered.

The first, formally executed shortly after she became a widow, assigned her property to be equally divided between her two dear daughters Mary and Milicent. By a second, written immediately after the elopement of Lady Mary, the former was cancelled; and the whole estate of Sophia, Countess of Bournemouth, real and personal, devised to the exemplary Lady Milicent; but whereas in this second hasty instrument no mention was made of legacies to executors, gra-

tuities to friends, pensions to old servants, or benefactions to the parish poor, it was by far the less popular of the two.

Of the third, it seems needless to speak. It was not a will ; that is, not a will according to the utmost rigour of the law. For, though written from the first word to the last in the well-known handwriting of the deceased, and dated on the very day of her death, so as unquestionably to record her latest wishes,—nay, though found in a drawer of the cabinet which she had opened to place it there and locked to secure it, so as to leave no doubt of the value she set upon the document,—yet, wanting witnesses, it was inoperative in the eye of the giant enemy we have created to fetter our own hands and overmaster our own intentions.

By this memorandum, “ Sophia Bournemouth again bequeathed her whole property to her daughter Milicent, for the term of her natural life ; burthened with annuities of six hundred pounds a-year a-piece to her beloved grand-

children William and Margaret Mordaunt, and fifty to Mrs. Marvyn: the whole of her estate to revert to the said beloved grandchildren at the death of her said daughter Milicent, if she died unmarried; or, being married, without male issue."

It was clear to Margaret that these provisions, long meditated by the dowager, and often frustrated by Lady Milicent's assurances that it was "time enough to summon her man of business and execute a will," had been hurriedly written down by the tremulous hand of the invalid, during the unusually long absence of her filial Argus. In all probability, Lady Bournemouth was beginning to apprehend the part played in her house by Dr. Macwheeble; and to feel anxious for the future destinies of poor Mary's daughter, when the home of her childhood became desecrated. Her search after the garnet bracelets was perhaps devised only as the means of secreting her testamentary intentions.

"At all events, you must allow me to keep

this paper, which you say is invalid, as a memento of the last act of kindness of my poor grandmother," said Margaret, refolding and taking possession of the shabby-looking sheet of note-paper, scrawled with crooked, feeble characters, after it had been contemptuously thrown aside by Lady Milicent. And as the harsh woman, compounded of bride and mourner, who seemed afraid to shed a tear lest she could discountenance her hybrid position, was too much occupied in the enumeration of her multiplied sources of wealth to care much for a scrap of paper, she took no heed of its appropriation by one against whom she still pretended to resent the circumstances of her mother's decease.

While Margaret remained at Hephanger, Lady Milicent never ceased to talk at her; and though, on the evening of Lady Bournemouth's funeral, and the eve of her granddaughter's departure from the home of her early years, Dr. Macwheeble thought fit to snuffle through a long exhortation to his new

niece to “arise and lay aside the vain and ungodly covetings of this wicked world, and reflect ere it was too late on the precarious nature of human life, as exemplified by the untimely departure of one who perhaps but from *her* levity might, by the will of Providence and the skill of the leech, be still preserved to her family and friends,”—Lady Milicent, albeit she nodded time to his harmonious periods, added nothing beyond a stern good-bye. It was an unspeakable comfort to her that her niece acquiesced so quietly in her arrangements; and that the Dean was as willing to receive her, as Margaret to go.

Perhaps, indeed, he had never felt her so completely his child, as when pressed once more in his arms, in all the pomp of black crape and bombazine. In her infancy, his own griefs—in her girlhood, the claims of her mother's family—had interposed between them. Now, that lovely, gentle, weeping daughter was all his own. For Margaret wept unrestrainedly. The courage which had borne her up against

the bitter attack of Lady Milicent, gave way at once when she found herself pressed to her father's heart. She had formerly allowed herself to fancy that by that father she was less loved than daughters have a right to be ; and that the door of the Deanery was not at all times paternally hospitable. But she now felt that the fault must have been her own. At all events, if coldness had previously existed, it should exist no longer. Her utmost endeavours should be exerted. The respondent tears in her father's eyes assured her that she was both beloved and welcome ; and Margaret was resolved that, so soon as her strength was restored, she would brighten and bless his remaining days by her dutiful devotion.

The Dean, the least interested of human beings, had inquired, among other questionings, whether Lady Bournemouth had left a will ; and when informed that she had bequeathed her whole fortune to her daughter by a will executed before the birth of either of his children, he perceived that it was an act of vengeance

against the offending Lady Mary, and was too delicate to inquire further. For a moment, he felt grieved that his offspring, especially Margaret, should have been injured by the imprudence of their parents. But bygones were bygones. He would repay his daughter's loss a thousandfold, when he succeeded to the Miltenham estate.

Saddened by the melancholy scenes through which she had passed, Margaret began to wonder how she could ever have considered the Deanery gloomy, or the routine of her father's life monotonous. It was now summer. The sweetbriar hedge fringing the old quadrangle was green and fragrant, and even the Dean seemed to revive under the influence of the balmy atmosphere. The higher class of inhabitants of R—— had deserted the cathedral close and grassy streets for the sea coast or foreign travel. The statelier families of Dursley, and the other Parks of the neighbourhood, were still fretting away their souls and bodies amidst the labours and pleasures of the London

season ; and the two sons of the Honourable and Very Reverend Dr. Mordaunt wearing their trencher caps at their several universities. But even thus thrown upon her own resources, Margaret was too happy in her release from the bondage of Hephanger, to be otherwise than content. She was allowed to fill with flowers the embrasures of her gothic windows. She was allowed the disposal of her time, and the command of an extensive library ; and so pleasant was it to find her every word and movement a matter of commendation, that she almost fancied Mrs. Pleydell and her niece must be speaking ironically, when they condoled with her on the dulness of her life.

The Dean, indeed, sometimes talked of a visit to his Rectory, before the autumn set in. But as Lord and Lady Mildenhall were travelling on the continent, there was less inducement than usual for so long a journey ; and from one week to another, from one month to another, the Mordaunts had brought it to the end of August ; when a visit from Willy,

at the close of the yachting season, reminded them, for the first time, that the scarlet heps on the sweetbriar hedge proved the summer to be at an end.

"How grave you are grown, dear Margaret," said he, after contemplating his sister in her mourning array. "The gloom of this dreary place is too much for you. You are looking quite thin and pale. Not pale now, however," he added, on perceiving that his abruptness had brought a blush into the cheeks of his sister.

"I have not yet recovered my long attendance upon my grandmother," said she. "At Hephanger, I was far more closely confined to the house than here."

"And to think that the old egotist who converted you into an upper servant, should not have left you the smallest token of gratitude!"—

"I cannot blame grandmamma; she did her best. Could she have had her own way, Willy, we should have been both liberally provided for."

“But what prevented her having her own way?”

“Her ignorance of the law, which gives everything to Lady Milicent.”

“There would have been plenty for Lady Milicent, and even for the fusty presbyterian she has engrafted on the family tree, after bestowing upon us half the portion which was due to our mother,” persisted William.

And so bitterly did he proceed to inveigh against the memory of the dowager, that his sister thought it due to her memory to exhibit the memorandum written on the day of her decease. Much as Margaret disliked talking about money-matters, she did her best to explain the deficiencies of the document, and satisfy him of the good intentions of the testatrix.

“And my father has taken no legal opinion upon this?”—cried he, as soon as he had perused the paper. “By Jove! Reginald is right. The Dean’s apathy about money matters literally amounts to a monomania. He allows twelve hundred a year to slip out of the family as easily as sand through an hour-glass! *Whose*

word have we but that precious Dr. Macwheeble's that this will is invalid? We ought to take counsel's opinion, Margaret; we ought to consult the best civilian going. This question concerns me, my dear girl, as nearly as yourself. Had I known of the existence of this paper, I should have endeavoured to establish it before probate was granted to Lady Bournemouth's antecedent will."

Margaret looked puzzled. "I wrote you word," said she, "that my grandmother had left an informal memorandum, in which our names were mentioned."

"Ay; but not to what effect."

"It seemed useless to enlarge upon it, since I was assured by every one at Hephanger that the paper was of no kind of value. And, just then, I was so chilled by the shock of my grandmother's sudden death, and the events that succeeded, that money appeared to lose its value."

"You have inherited my father's contempt for the yellow dross, eh, Margaret?" said her brother, kissing her forehead. "But if *some* of

the family do not look to the main chance, we may chance to see our Bassingdon miseries reviving. So, with your leave, I will run up to London to-morrow and consult Wraxley and Lumm, counsel-keepers, by appointment, to the house of Mordaunt."

Margaret readily entrusted to her brother's keeping, the paper on which she had been instructed to ground no hope of advantage. But unluckily, an engagement intervening to prevent the morrow's journey, William Mordaunt, eager and impatient, resolved to satisfy his misgivings by an appeal to certain local authorities, whose law, common and uncommon, governed the interests of the Dean and Chapter of R——.

"Old Lazenby has been fingering pounce and parchment these fifty years," argued William with himself; "and one of his sons is said to be an excellent lawyer. No harm can be done by taking their opinion. By this time, they *must* know something of their profession."

He almost repented his determination, however, after undergoing the cool cross-examination

of the dry old attorney. While Lazenby, senior, circumstantially investigated, through his clumsy silver spectacles, the paper revered by William as the diploma of his independence for life, following it line by line with his knuckly forefinger, and muttering audibly concerning the dotage of dowagerhood, his young client with difficulty repressed certain counter mutterings far from complimentary. But having carefully perused the paper, refolded it, replaced it in its envelope, and returned it to its owner, he shook young Mordaunt cordially by the hand.

“I wish you joy, Sir; joy to your charming sister, Sir; joy to my friend, the Dean. A holographic testament of the most unquestionable authenticity; supported by living witnesses of the utmost respectability! You may look upon this will, Sir, as already admitted to probate. We carried through just such a cause last term, Sir, for my old friend and client, Mrs. Susan Grimsthorpe, of Stoke Hall. I sincerely wish you joy.”

Another vehement shake of the hand served

to confirm a statement, the glibness of which created a momentary distrust in the mind of his auditor.

“Two opinions, Sir, are better than one,” resumed the old prig ; “and if you will entrust the paper to me, I will look it over with my son Daniel, whom I am expecting in every moment. Should his view of the case be as favourable as mine, Sir, we will draw up a little statement, to submit to our proctor in Doctor’s Commons : and, by Friday’s post, Mr. Mordaunt, your mind shall be perfectly set at rest.”

Plausible words—sufficiently plausible to draw from William Mordaunt’s pocket and replace in the hand of the man of business, the document, on which hung his destinies and those of Margaret. He felt almost grateful to the old lawyer for relieving him from a dusty journey to an empty metropolis. If in the sequel dissatisfied with the verdict of the Lazenbys’ proctor, it was but referring the matter at last to Wraxley and Lumm.

Thus lightly and thus thoroughly under the

influence of adventitious circumstances, has more than one lawsuit been commenced, entailing ruin upon generation after generation ! The Lazenbys clearly *did* know something of their profession—they understood the art of entangling a client. The opinion they obtained was strongly in favour of establishing the “holographic will of the late Countess of Bournemouth.” It was no longer called a paper. It was styled curtly a will. Messrs. John and Daniel Lazenby expressed much regret, indeed, that they had not been consulted in time to enter a caveat before probate was granted, as they found it had been, to an earlier paper, propounded by the Lady Milicent Harriet Macwheeble, daughter of the deceased Countess. But it was not too late. A suit in the Ecclesiastical Court, or a bill filed in Chancery, would soon settle the business. The cost would be trifling, as compared with the value of the property in dispute—a stake decidedly worth playing for.

It now became necessary to involve the Dean

in the dilemma. Aware of his father's repugnance to business of any kind (a pecuniary discussion invariably sufficing to draw the nail-file from his tremulous hands and bring on one of his worst head-aches,) William had carefully abstained from consulting him. But as it was impossible for Miss Mordaunt, a minor, to become plaintiff in a Chancery suit otherwise than with the sanction of her natural guardian or next friend, the Honourable and Very Reverend Reginald was required to pledge himself for his children.

Before the Hargreaves arrived at Dursley Park from Oak Hill, for pheasant-shooting, the Deanery was accordingly entangled, heart and soul, in meshes of red tape :—the most fatal net, perhaps, that can envelop a human destiny.

CHAPTER X.

I'll no say men are villains a'.—

The real harden'd wicked :

Wha hae nae check but human law

Are to a few restricket.

But och ! mankind are unco' weak,

An' little to be trusted :

If self the wavering balance shake,

Tis rarely right adjusted.

BURNS.

EVEN could the poor Dean have surmised that the instalment of his daughter under his roof would be concurrent with the suspension of the sword of Damocles over his head, in the shape of a lawsuit, he would have compounded

for the peril to secure the comfort of such companionship. For Lear had begun to understand the value of his Cordelia ; and even the plausible Harman and sanctimonious Mrs. Graves, when they found the young lady so unworldly-wise, and so little disposed to pry into account-books, were thankful for the ray of sunshine diffused by her presence into the old Deanery.

Margaret was perfectly happy. She read much ; she read with advantage, for she had leisure to digest the knowledge she acquired. The contact of death had sobered her youthful spirits ; and a thoughtful mind now imparted expression to the fair face hitherto brightened only by impulses of feeling. She was becoming eminently beautiful. Even Mrs. Pleydell and her niece, who, though their visits for the purpose of lubricating the dear Dean, were somewhat interrupted by his daughter's instalment as his legitimate consolatress, still haunted the premises, could not but admit that he was no longer the same man since his

daughter's arrival. "Miss Mordaunt was equally changed. So strangely womanly! So grave, and yet so cheerful! They supposed it was the law-suit—the prospect of a fine fortune."

The Mordaunts not being a communicative race, the gossips of R——, aware that they had "gone to law" with Lady Bournemouth's representative, but nothing wherefore,—were forced to fix the cypher of the tens of thousands contended for, according to the dictation of their fancy. And as it is not worth while to waste sympathy on trifles, they decided that the beautiful daughter of the popular Dean was about to become an heiress.

To assert that some portion of the changes of her mutable countenance was not attributable to the promises held out by the lawyers, would be untrue; for the sanguine Willy had such implicit faith in Knightrider Street, and Margaret believed so implicitly in the judgment of the sanguine Willy, that when he returned to Oxford (from the learned durance of which his seniors by a year, Hargreave and Fanshawe,

were already released), she was as fully convinced as himself that the dawn of the new year would find them rich and independent; and if rich, how much pleasure was in store for both ! What benefits to be bestowed on Nurse Hatley's needy children,—on the poor of Hep-hanger,—who, in losing the dowager, had lost their all.

While William, on the other hand, who, like most young men with an over-liberal supply of money, was considerably in debt, was painfully eager concerning the results of the suit, Margaret, confident of success, indulged only in pleasant visions of good to be done, kindly little surprises to her father; and, perhaps, a cadeau or two to herself of favourite books and engravings.

On the Dean himself, meanwhile, the excitement arising from the uncertainty of his children's prospects, had the beneficial effect of an effervescing draught. If the degradation of Bassingdon had unnerved him, and the prosperity of Mildenhall rendered him comatose,

the hazards of Chancery seemed to rouse him up into youth and vigour.

“ You have really no further excuse, my dear Mr. Dean,” observed Sir Thomas Hargreave, at the close of a long visit of business, relating to lands held by the wealthy baronet under the Chapter of R——, “ for secluding yourself from the society of your friends. You admit that you feel better than you have done for years. Why not come amongst us a little, and perfect your cure?—Change of air, my dear Sir, would set you up for the winter.”

The mere proposition almost sufficed to throw back the poor Dean upon the superseded resources of his medicine-chest. Tranquillity, and a cheerful home, had restored him to health. Strangers and the clamour of social merriment, would, he knew, be the death of him !

Sir Thomas, however, so far misinterpreted the silence caused by his consternation, into a desire to be pressed, as to persist and persist. Devoid, like most parvenus, of tact, he burst

into the sort of voluble argument which an invalid finds more irresistible than persuasion ; till he ended by extorting a promise that (D. V. and Harman and Mrs. Graves not opposing) the Dean and Miss Mordaunt would, on the following Thursday, dine and sleep at Dursley Park.

That it would be easy to send an excuse in the interim, was the only atonement to himself the Dean could suggest for the cruel injury he meditated to his own health and comfort. But when the plan came to be confided to Margaret, she so immediately embraced it as a pleasant interlude in their monotonous life, that he had not courage to announce his sinister intentions. A constitutional dread of giving or enduring pain, rendered it impossible to disappoint his darling child.

On a fine autumnal day, therefore, calculated to set rheumatism and influenza at defiance, the Dean allowed himself to be enveloped in a comforter or two, a few great-coats, and a pair of furred goloshes, and transferred to the cheer-

ful latitudes of Dursley Park. The town of R—— could scarcely believe its eyes when the green chariot, encumbered with servants and imperials, issued from the archway of the Deanery yard. They wished no harm might come of it. But the apothecary and Mrs. Pleydell mutually confided to each other their opinion, that this sudden change of habits in their valued old friend, like the unseasonable autumnal blossoming of an apple-tree, intimated lurking mischief, and perhaps a premature end.

But neither they, nor any other person, could appreciate the singular effect produced on Dr. Mordaunt by emergence from such prolonged shade, into the warmth and glare of a modern house, the abode of luxury and vanity, youth and ambition; chambers and conservatories glowing with all the colours of the rainbow and odours of the East; as though the five senses were to be indulged without let or hindrance; and green shades and Godfrey's salts, were a superfluous precaution. That he could have

undergone a noisy dinner of three courses, and an evening of lighted chandeliers and song and music, and survived it all, was a thing which, some weeks before, he would have pronounced impossible ; and which, some weeks afterwards, he could not reflect upon without shuddering. The respectful attentions of the Hargreave family, however, were not without their share in sustaining his strength.

But, to do him justice, his chief pleasure in the visit was derived from seeing Margaret admired and caressed. In her simple black dress, how far more distinguished than the Hargreaves in their Frenchifications !—How graceful her quiet manners !—How prepossessing her smile !—And, above all, how strange that those dressy, noisy, flippant, flirting damsels should appreciate her merit !

The next morning, however, brought its reaction of pains and penalties ; perhaps because the lack of his customary basin of water-gruel had rendered his pillow sleepless ; perhaps because a breakfast-table groaning, as country-

house breakfast-tables are apt to groan, filled his mind with dyspeptic visions and compunctions. So complete, at all events, was his panic, that when implored by his host and hostess to prolong his visit, because his son's friend, Mr. Fanshawe, and his son's friend's father, Sir Claude, were expected that day at Dursley Park, he was glad to compromise the matter by leaving Margaret as hostage in his place; Lady Hargreave undertaking to pay her back on demand.

His daughter, indeed, was inclined to demur; not only because averse that her father should return alone to his cheerless home, but overawed by the thought of finding herself unsupported in the midst of such a host of strangers. The Hargreave girls were too animated—too brilliant—for her taste or spirits. They seemed to glitter inwardly and outwardly from the reflection of prosperity. They had suffered no persecution, and learned no mercy. Even when they applauded, she shrank from them, as a dog from the patting of a boisterous child. No

delicacy of reserve in their natures!—All was show and glare, like the garlands of flowers and golden arabesques adorning their Aubusson carpets.

Emma and Julia were not, however, the less appreciated by the rest of the party; and as they did their utmost to render the house pleasant to visitors, were honestly entitled to their reward. Sir Claude Fanshawe, whose red riband had figured at half the courts in Europe, after toadying Sir Thomas, and playing the Chesterfield to Lady Hargreave, was seen listening with rapture to the sallies of one sister, and the *chansonnettes* of the other.

“Charming creatures, my dear Sir Thomas! Fine, natural charming creatures!” was his constant cry; and his dear Sir Thomas, already touched to the quick of his vanity by hearing his crude political theories applauded and annotated by the be-Bathed Machiavel, was grateful for such judicious praise. He had long noticed that young Fanshawe was more attentive than the common herd of dandies frequenting his

house, to his daughter Emma, and was not sorry to find his views thus sanctioned by paternal praise.

“My daughters are excellent girls,” he replied. “They have been brought up to adorn the highest lot, or comfort the lowest; for I have always determined that *their* inclination, and not mine, shall decide their marriage choice.”

“My own principle, to a hair!” retorted Sir Claude. “I have but one child, my dear Sir Thomas; and to him I have ever said, ‘marry young, my dear boy, marry young; and above all, be your own match-maker.’ I recognise in Herbert too superior an understanding to be subjected to subordination. No need to train your fine, healthy young sapling. Let it be rained upon, and snowed upon, and shone upon, and it will grow up as straight as an arrow.”

As Sir Thomas could by no means second propositions so unpaternally comprehensive, inasmuch as for the last ten years *his* authority

had been sitting like a night-mare on the spirit of *his* only son, judiciously evaded the argument.

"Yonder is another very sweet creature," said he, glancing with a patronizing nod towards Margaret Mordaunt; who sat listening with admiring wonder to the bravuras of her accomplished friends.

"The young lady in mourning?"

"In mourning for her grandmother,—the late Countess of Bournemouth."

"Lady Bournemouth? God bless my soul! One of my earliest friends. But, if I remember right, *her* daughter married some dissenting parson—some ranter?"—

"Lady Milicent Bourne made, late in life, a very discreditable match; and is now, I find, disputing the family property with my daughters' young friend yonder; who, I am assured, is certain of retaining it. Her father the popular Dean of R——, will, you know, be the next Lord Mildenhall."

"Reginald Mordaunt? To be sure! We

were at Eton together, and the greatest cronies!" cried Sir Claude, whom ill-natured people accused of knowing every body in every part of the world. "And he won't be long out of his property, I suspect! Mildenhall has been abroad for his health these ten months past; and some friends of mine the Marchmonts, met him at Nice the other day, looking like a ghost."

"When the Dean comes into his peerage and fortune," observed Sir Thomas, "he will resign, I imagine, his church preferment?"

"'Pon honour, I cannot guess! I have not met him since we were boys together. Mine has been an active career; *he* has burrowed snugly in the Church. But judging on general premises, my dear Sir Thomas, I should say—ha! ha! ha! that these are not times in which anybody is inclined to resign any preferment for any reason."

Sir Thomas laughed the laugh expected of him; but returned to the subject of the Dean. Since no particular intimacy existed between

him and Sir Claude, it was easy to treat of him as a valued neighbour, whom it would be grievous to see transferred to Mildenhall Abbey.

“The Dean of R——,” he added, “left us only yesterday. I was not aware that you were acquainted ; or I should have insisted on prevailing upon him to stay. Miss Mordaunt is a delightful acquisition to the society of my girls. But, of course, we shall not have her long among us. With her splendid prospects and great attractions, she will be soon appropriated. *You* have no daughter, I think ?” he continued, perceiving that the thoughts of Sir Claude were astray.

“None, thank Heaven ! To my active career, a daughter would have been a sad incumbrance. I must trust to Herbert for granddaughters to comfort my old age. But I fear my son will be less inclined than I would wish, to marry early. In these times, ambition is the favourite mistress. Most of our young men are wedded to public life.”

“Most, but not all !” replied the Baronet

of Dursley Park, with a sorrowful waive of the head, "I don't believe *my* boy would be tempted into the trammels of office to be made Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"And no wonder," retorted Sir Claude, with an involuntary glance round the sumptuous drawing-room, the glowing pictures on the walls, and glorious marbles on their pedestals. "With such enjoyments in prospect, it is not likely he should become one of the working bees. Literary leisure, combined with the useful and healthful career of a country gentleman, afford a too seductive alternative. *My* son must work his own way in the world." Then fearing that he might have deteriorated the position of Herbert in the eyes of one whom he had long marked down as his future father-in-law, he added—"and between ourselves, Herbert would disappoint more expectations than mine were he to shirk the thorns and briars of a public career. He was more thought of at Oxford, than my utmost wishes could have anticipated. My friends in the administration have their eye

upon him ; and, young as he is, are anxious to bring him into parliament.

“ At his age ?—a compliment indeed ! ”—

“ Not at his present age ; for just now, they have no seat for him. Meanwhile, I mean to keep him in close training. If I encourage him to choose a wife, it is because, in politics, he has allowed *me* to direct his choice. I consider Herbert the first precise writer of the day ; and many a leading article, highly influential in the late party controversy, has been attributed to *my* pen, for which my boy is solely responsible.”

Sir Thomas was wonderstruck and enchanted. He had unlimited faith in leading articles ; and, himself a day-labourer in the field of politics, regarded with prodigious deference the overseer of the works. On the skirts of the man admitted within the inner tabernacle of the official temple, supernatural brightness seemed to shine. Sir Claude need not have been afraid of placing his son in the light of a political adventurer. A political adventurer, pre-

assured of success, was, in the eyes of Sir Thomas Hargreave, worth a wilderness of wealthy esquires.

In the little circle at Dursley Park, there was however, a person still more impressed than even Sir Thomas Hargreave, with the consequence and deserts of Herbert Fanshawe. Margaret, who had often accused herself in the interval which had elapsed since their first meeting, of unduly magnifying his merits, was startled, on seeing him again, to find him far handsomer in person, far more ingratiating in manner, than memory had pictured him; though memory had probably been as prodigal as she usually is towards the hero of a first romance. But at Fanshawe's age, a year is a considerable lapse of time; and in his case, long months of social enjoyment had effected the same maturation, which sorrow and seclusion had wrought for the Dean's daughter.

They were no longer girl and boy. Margaret was not so childishly shy; or Fanshawe half so flippant. More polished he was, however, and

CHAPTER XI.

Dire was his thought who first in poison steep'd
The weapon form'd for slaughter ; direr his
And worthier of damnation, who instill'd
The mortal venom in the social cup,
To fill the veins with death instead of life.

MASSINGER.

THE old must remember of their own knowledge, and the young may have been taught by novelists and dramatists (who teach more, by the way, than their scholars are apt to admit,) that the toady of former days, and the parasite of other centuries, was a complaisant, compliant creature; making its way in the world by subservience and acquiescence.

It is not so now. The distinctive features of the class had grown too notorious ; the nature of the beast was apparent at a glance ; and all were on their guard. At the present moment, look out, on arriving in a strange house, for the man who complains to his host that his wine is corked, to the hostess that her children are troublesome ; the man who bullies the servants, and overworks the horses ; and in the shape of a domestic tyrant, or at all events of the man universally contradictory, you will be pretty sure to find the dirty dog of the establishment.

“What on earth could make Lady Hargreave invite Barty Tomlinson !” observed Sir Claude to his son, when they quitted the smoking-room together, on the night of the arrival of a loud Jewish-looking little man, who had been warmly welcomed by every member of the party at Dursley, and bitterly canvassed the moment his back was turned.

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“Barty is a good deal here. This is one of the country-houses he preys upon, between the London seasons.”

“Why, what does he expect to extract from such people as the Hargreaves? *They* would not throw away one of their daughters, with her fifty thousand pounds, on such a nonentity!”

“Certainly not. Nor would either of the daughters commit suicide so rashly.”

“On the other hand, Sir Thomas has no government interest. He squandered his last doit, in that way, to secure his baronetcy.”

“I don’t suppose Barty Tomlinson comes here place-hunting. Your salmon-fisher stoops occasionally to trout. Barty likes a house where he is sure of having his own way for as many weeks of the fifty-two as he finds no better entertainment for man and horse.”

“Pleasant quarters, I admit, for a vulgar, spunging fellow like Tomlinson!—But what are the Hargreaves about in submitting to be hectorred by so vulgar a little dog?”

“Here, he does not pass for a vulgar little dog. They know that he dines constantly at A. House and O. House; that he is the frequent guest of the Delaviles and Fitz-

mortons ; and seeing him admitted among the *élite*, have some right to suppose him good company."

Sir Claude shrugged his shoulders as if to imply "what sort of discrimination can one expect of *parvenus* like the Hargreaves !"

His son, perhaps to get a rise out of the K.C.B., went on to contend that though Barty Tomlinson was rough in manner and fractious in words, he was a useful *serviable* little animal ; who had done a great deal for Lady Hargreave by pushing her acquaintance among his aristocratic patronesses.

"Tomlinson finds his way everywhere," said Herbert ; "a grain of sand that slips through every sieve ;—a trivial atom, not worth kicking out of the way. And he has puffed the Hargreave *cuisine*, and Hargreave Dresden, and Hargreave pictures, with the small trumpet of a buzzing gnat, till people like the Delaviles and Fitzmortons become curious, and accept an invitation."

"That is the worst of houses where there are

daughters to marry!" ejaculated Sir Claude, peevishly. "The moment balls are in requisition, it is impossible for the circle to remain select. The Hargreaves may have reason to regret the introduction of such nondescripts as Tomlinson into their house. Men whose company is worth having, will not risk collision with a presuming nobody;—pretending to have opinions of his own merely to throw you off your guard and pick your pocket of *yours*, to refresh his stock in trade as a retailer of anecdotes, or jackal to the press."

"Come, come, my dear father!—Not quite so hard upon little Tomlinson."—

"Why you told me yourself you often caught him in Wellington Street, sneaking out of the editor's room?"

"He may say that he often catches *me* in Wellington Street, sneaking *in*. No matter. People are found sneaking into many a worse place. But, as regards Tomlinson, let me strongly advise you, Sir, not to tread on his toe. Tomlinson is a shrewd and vindictive little cur;

and would certainly attack, in return, your vulnerable heel."

Sir Claude was about to say, as he would have done had he been holding forth at his club, "I defy him!" But if most men fail to be heroes to their *valet-de-chambre*, a fashionable father, of Sir Claude Fanshawe's class, seldom contrives to remain a hero to his only son. He contented himself, therefore, with blandly replying, "He might, at all events, my dear boy, do you an ill turn with the Hargreaves."

Herbert Fanshawe smiled superior; conscious that it needed but the uplifting of his little finger to expel such an animalcule as Tomlinson from Dursley Park; seeing that the services rendered by this paltry fetcher and carrier of invitations could be twice as effectively accomplished by himself.

"That little girl of the Dean of R——'s," resumed Sir Claude, in the careless off-hand manner his son always found him assume when his interest in a subject was more considerable than creditable,—“did you know her to be a great heiress?"

“Miss Mordaunt an heiress? My dear father! who can have imposed upon you so impertinently?” replied Herbert, smiling. “She has two brothers; one, with whom I was at college, still poorer and more in debt than myself!”

A cloud passed over the specious brow of Sir Claude.

—“Which does not prevent his sister from being a heiress,” resumed the K.C.B. “The young lady will come in, it seems, for a large share of my old friend Lady Bournemouth’s fine fortune; besides what may be added when the Mildenhall property devolves upon the Dean of R——.”

“That accounts for Dick Hargreave’s coldness towards her!” muttered Herbert, aside. “I could not make out the cause of his rudeness to Willy Mordaunt’s sister. His people, no doubt, have been tormenting him to make up to her; a thing that never answers.”

This last hint was intended for the ear of the tender parent who, for a year past, had been suggesting to him that Miss Hargreave, with two thousand a year, would form a substantial

groundwork for his future fortunes ; that, for the able, active, only son of a Sir Claude Fanshawe, thus established, it would be easy to obtain place and profits ; whereas for a young man of wit and pleasure about town, leading a club life, and scrambling his way into notice, a clerkship, or at most, attachéship, would be the only attainable preferment.

“ I have worked *my* way to distinction,” had whispered the K.C.B. to his son, from the time he was old enough to understand and keep his counsel. “ But I have been unable to do more than live *au jour le jour*. Rank I have attained ; wealth you must accomplish. A mine of gold, however, lies under your feet. Nature has given you a personable exterior and excellent abilities—I, an excellent education. The pedestal is established. It remains for *you* to provide it with a statue.”

As yet the wily father, who, after all, was a tender parent as far as comported with the light that was in him, felt uncertain how far his lessons had profited. One of the objects

of his present visit to Dursley Park, was to determine whether it were worth while to prosecute the Hargreave project.

“In dealing with very young people, one never sees one’s way,” was Sir Claude’s secret reflection, as they travelled down. “A pair of blue eyes may overturn one’s farthest-sighted schemes; and who knows but that the daughter of a new baronet may aspire far above a commoner?—I will see, and judge for myself.”

By the rest of the Dursley party, the company of the condemned Tomlinson was otherwise appreciated than by the Fanshawes. To most country-house parties, indeed, he was considered an acquisition. Barty Tomlinson was a man not afraid of hearing his own voice; even in interruption of the deadest silence or most august personage. He was always ready to impart information to those who knew better than himself,—to patronize his superiors,—and to go in and win from his despisers. There was nothing he would not attempt in the way of rallying the dull out of their dulness, and

promoting by the discomfiture of the few the hilarity of the many.

His principal victims were his host and hostess. Lest anybody should suppose that he overvalued the venison and claret of Sir Thomas, or because aware that personal insolence often induces *parvenus* to set the same value upon a man which he sets upon himself, he seldom neglected an opportunity of placing themselves and their possessions in the most depreciating light. He made it a rule to contradict all they asserted, and oppose all they desired.

It was chiefly because he had overheard Sir Thomas Hargreave desire his son to give his arm to Miss Mordaunt into the dinner room, on the day of her arrival, that he made a point of becoming her cavalier. But Margaret was the gainer; for she would otherwise have fallen to the share of the cold and reluctant Dick Hargreave; whereas the little toady excited himself to the utmost for her entertainment; and very little did he surmise the relief she ex-

perienced at being overtaken by him, and escorted to her place, as she was loitering in the corridors towards the breakfast room next morning, lacking courage to confront so large a party.

The Hargreaves, though selfish and superficial, were not ill-natured girls. They were willing to exchange with their fair guest the usual kindnesses interchanged among interesting young ladies ; of lending her a saddle horse, teaching her their pet songs, and calling her by her Christian name—three inductive steps towards the sentimental friendships of eighteen. But to study her nature sufficiently to surmise that a girl brought up in such complete seclusion, might shrink from the publicity of a large party in a country house—feel shy whenever she was addressed by strangers—and hesitate about entering a room containing only twenty people—was a stretch of sympathy beyond their powers. They consequently inflicted many a painful minute upon the timid girl ; who, reared in dowager decorum and the muffled

presence of an invalid, found even a loud laugh an innovation.

She rallied her spirits indeed ; and tried to raise them to the level of the rest of the party. But the pompous interpellations of Sir Thomas from the end of the table, still made her heart beat ; and the morose silence of Dick Hargreave, and forward volubility of Tomlinson, often brought blushes to her cheek. The person, however, of whom she stood most in awe, was a certain Mrs. Hargreave, commonly known in the family by the name of Aunt Martha ; a spinster sister of Sir Thomas, who, residing in Lancashire, in the heart of the former associations and connections of the family, to the dismay of Lady Hargreave and her daughters, paid them an annual visit of some weeks, either at Dursley, Oak Hill, or in town ; according to *their* account, wherever she could make herself most disagreeable.

Aunt Martha was a sort of Nilometer of the family fortunes. She was not vulgar ; although, being dry in her deportment and

quizzical in her dress, she was accounted so by her sister-in-law and nieces ; for she never uttered an ignoble sentiment, or committed an unladylike action. But she was as stiff as became the spinster-hood implied in her name ; and her steely gray eye searched into things with a degree of severity which converted her into the walking conscience of the house. Aunt Martha mistrusted its grandeur, and despised its finery. In her own establishment, she contented herself with the best of everything, of the plainest kind. — But though incapable of luxuriating in rich brocades, or showy marqueterie, like Lady Hargreave, if possessed of them, she was equally incapable of over solicitude about their conservation, or pride in their display.

For her brother, the hard spinster cherished one of those strong affections which women left alone in the world often entertain towards their nearest male relative. Of him, she was both fond and proud ; nor did her limited knowledge of the world enable her to discern

the defects and shortcomings perceptible enough to the practised eye of a Sir Claude Fanshawe. But with his children, she was beginning to be dissatisfied. As long as they *were* children, the charm and prettiness of childhood, and occasional resemblances of look and gesture to their father, attached her to them all; and gratitude for her gifts and caresses, gave them the appearance of loving her in return;—the greatest of all charms in almost every human sight. But now she saw clearer. She perceived that they disliked, and were ashamed of her; and was consequently free to discern that their gaiety was hollow, and their egotism not the less heartless for being veiled by conventional politeness.

She was the first person to discover how much Miss Mordaunt suffered from being alone in the midst of their restless, chattering, bantering group; and one day, on finding poor Margaret hurrying down late to dinner, at the summons of the gong, yet standing panic-struck at the entrance of the brilliantly-lighted

hall, she tucked her cavalierly under her arm and marched her forward, with the stern perpendicularity of a policeman escorting a delinquent.

Aunt Martha little guessed how Margaret trembled in her grasp. But when, on taking her place at table, the unpopular spinster found herself a mark for the Minie-rifle raillery of Tomlinson, she silenced him by one of those sledge-hammer retorts, which justified at once the terror of the young girl, and the discomfiture of the brazen face so rarely discountenanced.

Sir Thomas, who had noticed the entrance of his sister and the Dean's daughter arm-in-arm, which implied a favour towards her on the part of the former strongly confirmative of his projects, renewed all Margaret's flutterings by choosing the first interval of conversation to address her by name. It was one of the gaudy days of Dursley. Several neighbouring families were assembled, in addition to their own large party; and he fancied it conducive to her consequence and his own to signalize the high connections of his timid young inmate, by

“hoping the post had brought her satisfactory accounts of her father; and that the Dean had received better news from the continent of the health of his brother, Lord Mildenhall.” As this was the third time since she arrived at Dursley that Margaret had found occasion to reply, that they seldom heard from her brother Reginald, and that between her father and uncle there was no sort of correspondence, she could not help wondering why, since Sir Thomas had so deep a personal interest in the health of Lord Mildenhall, he did not apply to informants better qualified to set his anxiety to rest.

The heightened colour with which she endeavoured to make her answer audible to the man from whom she was divided by half a service of plate, and a dozen inquisitive-looking faces, drew upon her the stare of all the strangers present; and the relief was as great as unexpected when Herbert Fanshawe, who was seated near her, drew off the attention of Sir Thomas by a hasty proposal of shooting his outlying coverts the following day.

“I cannot get Dick to make arrangements with the keepers, Sir Thomas,” said he; “and the birds are getting scarce in the home woodlands—*Mieux vaut avoir affaire à Dieu, qu'à ses saints*; and I therefore invoke your authority.”

Sir Thomas bowed, smiled, and took sherry with his interlocutor as if he understood every word; while young Hargreave sat wondering from a distance what sudden fit of stupidity or forgetfulness could have taken possession of his friend Herbert, that he should not remember where they had been shooting the previous day, or what capital sport they had enjoyed.

“The pheasants in Waltham Wood have less to thank me for than yourself, Miss Mordaunt.” said Fanshawe, in a low voice, on finding Margaret a moment alone, that evening, looking over the illustrations of a batch of German fairy-tale books, which had just arrived from town. “You would have had to afford bulletins of the health of the whole Mordaunt family, in a voice capable of penetrating a pair of ears

stunned by twenty years of parliamentary debating, had I not come to your assistance."

Margaret was astonished. It was the first time Mr. Fanshawe had addressed her familiarly since they had been in the house together. And now, he spoke so kindly, to announce how considerately he had befriended her!—She was not ready at reply; but her eloquent countenance expressed sufficient gratitude.

"Sir Thomas is one of those worthy men," he continued, setting down his coffee-cup, and taking a seat by her side, "who abuse the privilege of being a bore conceded to country baronets. At his age, he ought to be aware of the impropriety of asking questions elsewhere than in Parliament, which are as irksome to the person questioned as the reply is indifferent to all present—himself included. I remember the time when he used to cross-question and discountenance my blushing, modest self, concerning my Oxford studies; nay—further back still—concerning my progress in trap-ball and the Eton grammar."

“Have you been so long acquainted with the Hargreaves?” said Margaret, a little surprised. “No wonder you seem like one of the family!”—

“Do I seem like one of the family? Well—if you say so, I suppose I must submit. But I should never have surmised it. Do not mention your opinion to my poor father; with whom I saw you flirting desperately in the billiard-room after breakfast; or it might bring on an apoplectic fit.”

“But why?—Since they appear so much your friends, and after so long a series of years?”—

“Oh! nothing—only we of the old Saxon blood are apt to fancy distinctions between our race and that of—but my observations are getting nearly as *saugrenu* as those of Sir Thomas! By the way, Miss Mordaunt, may I inquire whether you have consented to ride Dun Patty to-morrow?—I heard Julia Hargreave making arrangements with Tomlinson and Harberton, and endeavouring to persuade their

brother and father to join them ; on the plea that you had promised to accompany them to the meet."

"They proposed my being of the party. But I understood that it was to be with Lady Hargreave, or their aunt, in the barouche."

"Lady Hargreave finds herself too rheumatic for open carriages, now that the trees have lost even their russet suits. As to Aunt Martha, the poor old lady is as likely to be found behind the scenes at the Opera, as at the covert side ! The arrangement for you is, that you should ride Miss Hargreave's mare, while she borrows her brother's second hunter."

"If they are all going to ride, I shall be delighted to join them."

"How many do you comprehend within that significant 'all?' If among them your unworthy humble servant, you make him a very happy man, and determine him at once to give up the shooting party. For to say the truth, dear Miss Mordaunt, no one is better up than myself in the pranks of Dun Patty ; whom I

sold to Dick Hargreave, not for his sister's use, but his own. I fear she is not altogether to be trusted within sight of hounds and red coats."

"Yet Julia manages her to perfection !"

"Julia Hargreave rides—*passez-moi le mot*—like a rough rider. Julia Hargreave rides as I should not allow my sister, and should be sorry to see my wife. I flatter myself, that Miss Mordaunt would be quite unequal to manage Dun Patty, unless closely seconded by one of the harder sex."

Miss Mordaunt was luckily not called upon to answer just then, or to make the attempt on the morrow. The moment Aunt Martha understood that her chaperonship could be advantageous to the fair young girl in mourning, whose voice was so gentle, and whose deportment so diffident, she expressed a strong desire to see the meet. And there she appeared, the following day ; in a brown merino gown and cloak, contrasting strangely with the rich lining and silken fringe of the family barouche.

As they were about to enter the carriage, Lady Hargreave vainly endeavoured to conceal her queer, gaunt sister-in-law's figure, under her own velvet mantle. Aunt Martha looked displeased, and talked of a Welsh whittle. She had calculated justly. Not an eye at the covert side strayed towards *her*. All the attention that could be spared from horses and hounds, was absorbed by the lovely being at her side.—

CHAPTER XII.

Fair Bessie Bell I lo'ed yestreen
And thought I ne'er could alter ;
But Mary Gray's twa pawky e'en
Have garr'd my courage falter.

SCOTS' SONG.

MARGARET was now an established county beauty. The event of an hour will often accomplish this perilous triumph. The award of a drawing-room, a Christmas ball, an archery meeting, a race-stand, suddenly converts some unnoticed girl into an angel. And thus Margaret Mordaunt was promoted, as by the Gazette, into "the beautiful daughter of the Dean of R——."

No one was surprised that she should receive

marked homage from the guests assembled at Dursley, including Sir Claude Fanshawe and his son; and if it occurred to Emma Hargreave that the attentions of the latter were somewhat more demonstrative than was becoming in one who had been long her all but declared lover, she was too proud or too polite to complain.

The cry after a new beauty resembles a popular panic; an infectious mania, leaving no leisure for discussion. People vied with each other in bringing flowers to Margaret; in lending books to Margaret; in inditing verses for Margaret. Everybody suggested some new occupation for her; everybody projected some new diversion.

The Hargreave girls joined strenuously in the general Pœan. But in their hearts, they probably wished her safe back at the Deanery; for it was plain from their brother's increasing coldness towards her, that he had no intention of seconding the matrimonial schemes injudiciously betrayed by the heads of the family. They settled it between themselves, that Dick

had probably formed an attachment elsewhere ; or that he considered Margaret Mordaunt too shy and inanimate for the brilliant position in life fated to be filled by his wife. Both of them had seen him watch her closely, and with an air of contemptuous compassion ; more particularly when his friend Fanshawe was vainly labouring to warm her up into conversation.

Margaret was, in fact, a far more eloquent listener than talker ; her varying countenance and complexion affording answer enough to one whose conversational powers formed, graceful and handsome as he was, one of his brightest endowments. It would have been strange indeed, if a recluse like Lady Bournemouth's granddaughter had remained undazzled by displays which even the London wit-mongers estimated at a high premium.

Had any one presumed to salute Herbert Fanshawe with the title of "literary man," both father and son would have indignantly repelled the aspersion. Not at the haughty prompting

of the Saxon blood, of which, in suitable junctures, they affected to be proud. But because aware that the smallest sprinkling of printer's ink affixes an indelible stain on the character of an official aspirant. We all know that scarcely a man of mark in public life but has perpetrated his book ;—memoirs, drama, essay, pamphlet, or novel. But *they* know, and to their cost, that they have achieved office, not by virtue of authorship, but in its despite. *They* know how often the crime of letters has been thrown in their teeth ; and how, in their place in Parliament, they have writhed under the scoffs and scorns vented upon the wretched author in his guise of senator, simply because elsewhere it was less safe to call him “ scribbler,” or “ back.”

But though the Fanshawes were much too worldly to be ignorant, that with a social position such as theirs, the notoriety of authorship would do more harm than good to the rising young man, they were not blind to the advantages to be derived from association with lettered men. Even before Herbert ceased to be a Ch. Ch. cub,

accordingly he frequented literary clubs, and literary society; was privileged to shake by the hand the leading bibliopoles and journalists, as well as to touch his hat to men whose names are consecrated by Quarterly Reviews, and rendered contraband on foreign frontiers. Actors and dramatists were covetous of his plaudits; and many a budding poet hastened to forward to Herbert Fanshawe, Esq. an early copy of his maiden volume.

For in these days, the part of Mecænas is not as of old, an onerous vocation. A future Lord Chesterfield might accept the dedication of a new dictionary, without peril to his 3 per cents., or fear of a Johnsonian diatribe. Grub Street, we are told by a great living authority, is among the things that have been; and authors are so much prouder, or so much less poor, than in the days of Goldsmith, that even the shabbiest of patrons need not button up his pocket too ostensibly. Aspiring geniuses, like young Fanshawe, may, consequently, sponge upon their contemporaries for ideas; may prey upon their wit; may

pirate their intelligence; may brighten their dulness by contact with more precious metal; may season their insipidity by pilfering the vivid effusions of the convivial hour; and, after interpolating into their own vapid discourse the sterling sense, or sparkling phrases, they have pocketed as linkmen pick up the jewels scattered in the dust after a fête, are free to look down superior on a literary career, and estimate the makers of books among other manufacturing classes! There is no patent law for colloquial inventions; and many a pregnant thought has been stolen by interlopers in the world of letters, and carried up into the high places of the land, to germ and fructify for their advantage; as the eagle carries off a lamb from the fold of the poor shepherd, and feeds upon it in his eyrie.

And such was the origin of Herbert Fanshawe's raciest wit and most pungent sallies. The anecdotes he so judiciously strung together, were pearls collected by needy, naked divers; and heartily astonished would have been many of his mates of the Garrick, and unproduceable

friends of the Cyder-cellar, could they have heard the aristocratic mirth elicited by their transplanted *bon mots*, the savour discovered in the grapes gathered from their thorns, and the figs filched from their thistles.

Tomlinson indeed occasionally saluted the brilliant Herbert with an ironical cheer; a hint that his incomparable mimicry of a popular actor was but the imitation of an imitation; that his best charade was a shabby crib from Hook, and his best song a parody on the worst of Barham's. But Sir Thomas, whose knowledge of books was confined to the backs of those in his library, which he had purchased with the Dursley property, or the costly Blue-books provided for him by the State, continued to bestow his ponderous applause whenever the forked lightning of the plagiarist served to clear the heavy atmosphere of his dinner-table.

But what mattered far more to Herbert Fanshawe, the beautiful Margaret, in whose eyes the very names he quoted reflected back the far-off brilliancy of planets, listened to him with

her whole soul beaming out of her dark grey eyes.—Was it in gratitude for her attention that he followed up his *bon mots* with whispers very far from audible in the gallery?—

Ten days had elapsed since the Dean's departure, and Margaret was still at Dursley. For though she had daily planned her departure for the morrow, letters had as constantly arrived in answer to Lady Hargreave's petitions for an extension of Miss Mordaunt's leave of absence, fully authorising her stay. At length, at the close of a fortnight, in spite of the growing docility of Dun Patty, the unconcealed passion of Herbert Fanshawe, and the extravagant adulation of Sir Claude, anxiety concerning her father prevailed over her keen enjoyment of the sunny life shining around her, and the dreams that were lending wings to her imagination. The green chariot was, according to her request, despatched for her. The time for departure arrived. Her hands were shaken by a dozen other hands, with more or less intensity of

pressure. Her cheek was warmly kissed by one sister, her brow slightly touched by the other ; and lo ! the Jupiter Tonans of the house, Sir Thomas Hargreave, took her arm under his own, and conducted her in state to the portico, where his crowd of menials was clustered.

With repeated " compliments to his excellent friend the Dean," he handed her into a carriage which his London-bred head-coachman decided ought to be " brukken up for lumber." The door closed. The curtain fell upon the brilliant scene at Dursley Park ; and away went Margaret Mordaunt back to R——, with as many new thoughts and feelings struggling in her heart and brain, as beset the young scholar digesting his first perusal of Homer.

On arriving at the Deanery, the stillness of the old place struck a chill into her heart. She almost sickened, while mounting the muffled staircase, at the accustomed smell of mildew ; well-calculated to suggest to the invalid pro-

prietor, visions of medicine chests, water-gruel, and the family vault. Once in her father's presence, however, her heart-sickness vanished; for she was greeted not only with one of the Dean's outbursts of nervous emotion, but with that outbeaming smile of innermost love, which never beams more brightly than from the eyes of a parent. Many had lately dwelt fondly upon Margaret; but none with the hallowing light that fell upon her from those of her father.

Poor old man!—He was inexpressibly glad to have her near him again; and it was an act of real self-sacrifice to have spared her so long!—Margaret *felt* that it was; and every moment felt it more and more, as she noticed how far less well in bodily health he appeared, than when they parted at Dursley. Could fretting for her company have diminished his strength and appetite; so as to bring into such striking relief the lineaments of that hand-

some profile, the boast of the partial spinsters of R—— ?

“ You have not been taken care of during my absence, dear papa,” said Margaret, taking his hand, after assuming her habitual place by his side. “ Mrs. Graves has allowed you to grow quite thin and languid. Do you feel ill ? —Does Harman foresee a fit of the gout ? ” —

“ Not in the least, my dear—not in the least ! ” —quickly rejoined her father, as if superior to his usual evil forebodings. “ I never felt better in my life.”

But his faltering voice belied his words : and when he laid his hand upon the head of his daughter, it trembled more than she had ever felt it before.

“ I am afraid then that the R—— people have been boring you ? ” she fondly persisted. “ That troublesome Archdeacon has been worrying you with Chapter squabbles ; or Mrs. Pleydell has renewed her daily calls ? ” —

“ No, my darling. Everything has been

quieter than usual ; and the Pleydells are still at Scarborough."

Margaret said no more. She almost feared that her father might have missed the society of Mrs. Pleydell and her niece, rather than her own. For she had been warned at Dursley that the mellow spinster fully intended to become her mother-in-law !

By degrees, roused by her questions, the Dean grew more cheerful ; interesting himself in the details of her visit to Dursley, and recalling to mind his juvenile acquaintance with Sir Claude, well known at Eton by the name of Lying Fanshawe. And when night came, and after the basin of gruel swallowed apparently with his usual gusto, the Dean, summoned to rest by Harman, took leave of her by saying, "God bless you, my own dearest child. It makes me happy to have you under my roof again !" Margaret felt that she had been wrong throughout ;—most so, perhaps, in having remained so long away.

Next morning, it was impossible not to discern that the Deanery looked far more grim and desolate than before her introduction to brighter scenes. Her book grew heavy in her hand, as she endeavoured to turn the pages. She could not work; for there was no one to read or chat to her, to animate her stitching. The fire smoked slightly; and she rang for some logs to make a blaze. But firewood was not the order of the day at the Deanery: Dr. Mordaunt entertaining a sanatory dread of carbonic acid gas. She was fain, therefore, to put up with the smothering atmosphere, and the quarto which so weightily replaced the light reviews and pleasant serials of Dursley Park. But she felt that life at the Deanery of R—— was a ponderous vehicle, moving upon creaking wheels.

Her spirits were not cheered by a letter from her brother William; which, some days after her return, was placed in her hands.—Not that it was of a desponding nature. Far from it. The

letter was only too light—too wild—too reckless ! The writer was evidently fluctuating on those buoyant pinions of Hope, so apt to elevate the sanguine into perilous altitudes.

“ I have capital news of our suit, dearest Meg,” wrote he. “ There seems little question but that January will see it decided in our favour. At first, you know, I determined, in the event of gaining it, to resign the allowance of five hundred a-year made me by my father. But the dear old fellow, with his usual gentlemanly liberality, would not entertain the proposition ; for which, between ourselves, I am thankful—seeing that, like many of my betters at Ch. Ch., and most of my worsers, I have managed to get confoundedly in debt. But what I am far more grateful for to Providence and my grandmother than even the power of honestly whitewashing myself, is the certainty of escaping the tarring, without the feathering, to which I am so barbarously predestined by my nearest of kin. To think of being able to

pitch into the great deep the living of Mildenhall, with all its tithes, instead of tying it like a mill-stone round my neck!—No one—not even my worst friend or best enemy—could think it necessary for me to take orders, *now* that I am so amply provided for. I have already signified as much to Regy; who seems to be maundering on in his lymphatic courtship of Anne Mordaunt; accompanying the Mildenhalls from one mineral spring or crack or quack doctor to another; in search of *les eaux de Jouvence* for a mouldy Viscount; who having been only half-alive through his three score years, has lived only thirty. Q. E. D. What I write to ask you, my dear sister, is to break mildly to the old gentleman all I have cavalierly manifested to my unloving brother; namely, that I have positively determined against entering the Church.”

This was a trying commission for Margaret. Her father's heart was set upon seeing his favourite son succeed him in his preferment;

and, on William's account, costly improvements had been sanctioned at Mildenhall Rectory. The only personal vanity, indeed, indulged in by the popular Dean, was the notion that when he was gone, a Mordaunt would still be cited as an orthodox pillar of the Church ; gentlemanly in deportment, and spotless in social life as in his surplice. Graces more ghostly were beyond his imagining. But he *did* hope that William would be loved by his parishioners, respected in his diocese, and dignified in the pulpit.

Aware of all this, his daughter could not bear to think of his disappointment. More cognizant of the frailties of her brother's character, she was far from wishing him to take Orders, unless his mind were prepared for the sacrifices due to his vocation. But she had firmly hoped that time would render him more steady ; and that at the appointed season, William would adopt those graver views of the duties of life, essential to perfect his character.

Her hopes were now at an end. He was evidently growing flightier and flightier. But why inflict upon *her* the task of removing the scales from the eyes of their father?

It was November weather; and the cold fog of a drizzly day filled the room whenever the casement was slightly opened to dispel the gusts of smoke. Nothing could be more depressing. As soon as the Dean in his wadded gown made his appearance, Margaret endeavoured to enliven his monotonous day by reading to him, first the newspaper, next, one of those favourite volumes of Cowper, or Hayley, from which for half a century, he had extracted a mild satisfaction. But in labouring mechanically through the University Intelligence of the Morning Herald, or some lengthy letter signed "Philalethes," or "Ecclesiasticus," touching Diocesan wrongs or Catholic Innovations, she was pained at the querulous drone insensibly acquired by her own weary voice. While reciting the milk-and-water trials of "Serena,"

or the namby-pamby philosophy of the "Task," her soul thirsted for the stirring ballads of Macaulay, or the touching lyrics of Tennyson and Longfellow, which she had recently heard with her ears,—how exquisitely declaimed by one of the most harmonious voices in the world!—

She managed, however, to read her father gradually to sleep; (a frequent triumph, alas! of filial piety on hazy November afternoons;) when the muffin bell tinkles the knell of parting day, and firelight gains the ascendancy over that cobweb-coloured daylight, which England enjoys after the sun has entered Aquarius.

Then, having closed her thin quarto, she laid it patiently on her knees, lest by moving she should disturb the Dean; and supplied the want of better occupation by one of those fire-gazing reveries which are supposed to discover towns and cities in the burning coals; but which are far more apt to detect "antres vast and deserts idle," in the solitudes of our own heart.

Could any girl, still in her teens, have done less at such a moment, than waste a thought on Dun Patty ; and two or three on the gallant cavalier, who, as poor Hood sings,

Rode so gaily by her side,
And whispered her so near,

while instructing her to manage that wilful palfrey ?—Pleasant was it to recal their rambling rides through the woodlands, where the sturdy old oaks defended against the autumnal breezes their coats of tawny ; where the acorns came rattling down like hail, and the pine-cones were impelled like shuttlecoks from the elastic boughs. The feathery fern, deepening from gold to russet, the robins singing among the fading branches, the aromatic fragrance of the dewy woods, were again around her. She seemed to hear the muffled tramp of the horses on the moist grass strewn with dead leaves ; the merry laughter of the Hargreaves in the distance ; the occasional short gallop of a

horseman breaking forward to apprise the stragglers of some change in the route; the shout addressed to some lagging groom, or vagrant of the party. And still, the same ingratiating whisper breathing in her ear; and still, the blue sky bending over all:—that clear, ultra-marine autumnal sky, flecked with fleecy clouds; or encrusted with hard, high, gleams of sheeny white, like lapis lazuli with mother of pearl.

How different from the low-browed, smoky, dingy library from whence that youthful spirit took its flight!—Margaret! make the most of thy vision!—Thou wilt recur to it, child, in drearier scenes, amidst the stern realities of life, as to a mirage of thy heart's first love:—

that all

Which Eve hath left her daughters since her fall.

Already, alas! a dark perspective gloomed before her, to counterbalance these pleasant reminiscences. If a second time invited to

Dursley, she could not again leave her father ; and even if again invited, and faithless to her filial duties, no chance of a second meeting with Herbert Fanshawe. Sir Claude had more than once apprised her that he and his son were bound for Paris ; that they were to spend the winter there, at the express invitation of his old friend the Ambassador ; and though she might have supposed it possible for the mercurial son to change his mind, that hard-featured, hard-hearted, hard-headed, but particularly soft-spoken old K.C.B, was as immutable as an almanack.

Then rose other dreams before the mild, grey eyes, still strained, as if to examine the glowing grate : dreams of Paris—that Paradise of forbidden fruit, where intellectual excitement is sublimated to its highest ecstasy ; and sensual pleasures are purified of half their grossness. Paris would interpose between them like a gorgeous curtain, whose velvet folds no thought of *her* would ever penetrate,—the flattery she

had found so irresistible would, perhaps address itself to other ears ; and the sweet smiles which had enthralled her, poison some other heart.— She wished, she *almost* wished it had never been her fortune to incur the fatal influence of Herbert Fanshawe's love.

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CHAPTER XIII.

The shadows flit upon the wall,
By the still dancing fire-flames made ;
And now they slumber, moveless all,
And now they melt to one deep shade,
But not from me shall this mild darkness steal thee,
I dream thee with mine eyes and at my heart I feel thee.

COLERIDGE.

SHE thought all this over again that night upon her pillow ; in the vague moment preceding slumber, so exquisitely described by Coleridge ; when the colour of our latest reflections is apt to influence the texture of our dreams ; that instant of the 86,400, which, of all others, one would select to be remembered

in by the person whose affections are dearest to us upon earth.

Whether Margaret's visions of the night were inspired or not by her reminiscences, she certainly woke next morning—

In that perplexity of mind
Which dreams too earnest leave behind ;

nor could she forbear congratulating herself that she should have the day to herself, to be sad in.

“Thank Heaven, those tiresome Pleydells are still at the sea-side,” said she. “I could not have borne their officious cross-questioning concerning the Dursley party. My father is so different ;—asking nothing more than one wants to tell, and putting no misconstructions on one's tellings, or one's silence.”

The weather was perseveringly disagreeable, as if priding itself on its ill-doing ; and Margaret resumed her place in the same chair, with the self-same book in her hand, with her beautifully braided hair yielding back the same streaks of

light to the same reflections from the fire, as though she had been nailed to her place all night, like an Italian greyhound tortured at leisure in one of Majendie's experiments. Unhappily, the Dean was less slumberous than the preceding day. Still more unhappily, a letter from the Lazenbys having put him into unusual spirits, he began to talk of William, and his happy prospects in life, as was his wont when his digestion was good.

In the midst of his cheerful anticipations, as he sat with Margaret's hand clasped in his own—while with the other she held the still unopened volume, carefully marked at their leaving off, which, poor girl, she was very little likely otherwise to have remembered,—the door was opened by Harman less gingerly than usual, to announce “Sir Claude and Mr. Fanshawe.”

A hurried business it was for Margaret to disengage her hand, and lay aside “The Triumphs of Temper” in time to welcome them with decorum. So completely, indeed,

was she startled, that Herbert Fanshawe, presuming on the former graciousness of the Dean, took on himself the presentation of his father, as "an old Eton friend of Dr. Mordaunt, most anxious to have the honour of renewing his acquaintance after a lapse of five-and-thirty years."

As thoroughly "lying Fanshawe" as when they trap-balled together aforetime in the playing-fields, Sir Claude stepped briskly up to the infirm man ; pressed his hand with plausible unction ; and asked more questions in a breath, than the Dean was in the habit of answering in a week. Any one might have supposed not only that the K.C.B. had driven to R——, ten miles out of his way on his road to town, solely for the pleasure of an interview with its popular Dean ; but that, for years past, Sir Claude had entertained no dearer wish than to re-cement their broken intimacy. For he was one of those worst of hypocrites who assume at will a truly naïf *bonhomme* ; — with a

semblance of warmth capable of ripening green grapes on a northern wall. — Overpowered by his ardour, the Dean felt ashamed that he should have judged him so severely in boyhood, and so completely forgotten him ever since.

His son, meanwhile, profited by the reminiscences they were mutually recalling of Surly Hall and Brocas meadows, and “the Montem when Harberton was Captain,” to whisper in the ear of Margaret, a faint echo of all he had been hourly pouring into it before they parted at Dursley. He inquired anxiously when she was again likely to visit the Hargreaves ; and whether, if he were able to get away from Paris for a week during the carnival (when his father would be too much engaged to miss him) there would be any chance of his being welcome at R—— ?

He spoke of the misery of leaving England, as though a journey to Paris were an Arctic expedition ; and of himself as the most wretched of victims, in being pledged to accompany Sir

Claude, when his whole soul would remain riveted at R——. He called her “ dear Margaret.” Yes ! in the faintest and tenderest of whispers, with tears brimming in his eyes, he ventured to call her Margaret, “ *his* Margaret.” He said in short every thing usually said by young gentlemen at liberty to be desperately in love ; but not quite at liberty to make an offer of their hand.

What Sir Claude might be offering at that moment to the Dean, it would have been difficult to conjecture—so propitiating were his smiles—so flattering his words. It might be a son-in-law—it might be a mitre !—For he expressed both wonder and indignation at finding that Lord Mildenhall’s interest had carried his old school-fellow no higher up the ladder of preferment than a “ paltry Deanery ;” and was appeased only on hearing that the Cain of the House of Mordaunt was in most precarious health ; having his peace to make

with a higher Power than the First Lord of the Treasury.

Having ascertained that his quondam cricket-mate never stirred from home, Sir Claude invited him strenuously to pay him a visit in Spring Gardens ; and was just beginning to compliment him on the possession of a daughter whose beauty was worthy to produce the siege of a modern Troy, in a tone loud enough to bring blushes to the cheek of Margaret and cause those of her companion to wax paler than usual, when, lo ! once more—a rare occurrence twice within one day—the door of the library was thrown open for the announcement of visitors ; and in cackled Mrs. and Miss Pleydell ; like a couple of Shanghai fowls at a poultry show.

At all times garrulous about nothing, they came prepared to relate to the Dean the incidents of their six weeks' pleasuring ; with all the circumstantiality of two foolish vulgar

women, accustomed to find their vapid anecdotes acceptable to a sedentary invalid. Devoid of tact to perceive that their tattle was importunate in presence of strangers, Mrs. Pleydell monopolised the Dean, and her niece his daughter, with an outbreak of volubility such as distanced even that of Sir Claude Fanshawe.

On the entrance of these untimely visitors, the K.C.B. prepared himself to be affable; for had he found a bison seated by the fireside of Lord Mildenhall's brother, he would have forborne with the beast, and inquired kindly after its health. But when Mrs. Pleydell (after playing over again all the rubbers at whist she had won or lost since she quitted R——, and discussing certain miraculous cures she had seen effected by cod-liver oil, interlarding her narrative with the text and argument of the Bishop of R——'s last visitation sermon), turned towards Herbert Fanshawe to inquire *when* they were to receive wedding favours for his marriage with their sweet young friend, Emma

Hargreave, his patience ran short. He denied the imputation as angrily as if his son had been destined to a Cardinal's hat.

"I understood that my good friend, Lady Hargreave was not *quite* satisfied with the match," retorted the Archdeacon's lady. "For Lady Hargreave, bless her silly heart, has always had a hankering after titles. She would not have disliked for a son-in-law the son of our friend here, the Dean; merely because her daughter would be the Honourable Mrs. Mordaunt. But you must not be downhearted. She'll come round in time. After all, what matters how people's letters are addressed, or in what order they walk out of a room; and, except in such matters, what difference, pray, betwixt the Honourable Mrs. Mordaunt and plain Mrs. Fanshawe?"—

It was poor consolation to Margaret, whose cheeks were dyed with crimson by this unlady-like loquacity, that the countenance of Herbert Fanshawe implied how much he pitied her for

being condemned to associate with such a Vandal,—

Sir Claude, foreseeing no end to her visit, and apprehensive that she might bring her tomahawk to bear upon himself, rose to take leave. And as the door closed upon the departing guests, Margaret would fain have exclaimed with the despairing Juliet—

Farewell! Heaven knows when we may meet again!

Her day for despair, however, was over. She repined no longer. She became active—she became cheerful. She ceased to fret that her brother had thrown his surplice *aux orties*; or to perceive that her father was wasting away. Nay, before a week was over, she had not only forgiven, but was almost beginning to feel an interest in the Pleydells; as having been present at that memorable interview which enriched her with the certainty of being beloved.

The days might now be as dark as they pleased; the heart of Margaret was bright with

excess of light. She read Hayley with as contented an intonation as though it had been Wordsworth ; and Caliban might have brought her “ firing at requiring,” and she would not have perceived that pine logs replaced sea-coal. All which must suffice as evidence that Margaret Mordaunt was decidedly in love.

Had it been otherwise, she could not have failed to notice how often her father called for his spectacles, and put them on to examine certain lengthy documents which reached him per post, the corners whereof were bound together with green galloon, and the edges of the paper jagged and business-like :—indicative of those concentrated essences of human right and human wrong, called legal documents. She must have seen that his face was growing care-crazed ; that he ate his gruel without relish, and trifled with the spoon as with a tooth-pick. Though aware that the Hargreaves were absent from Dursley on a tour of visits, he more than once asked his daughter, in an absent way, why they never came

to call upon her ; and once, when Mrs. Pleydell remarked in his presence upon the complimentary flourishes of Sir Claude Fanshawe as savouring of the foreign diplomat rather than the English gentleman, the Dean, usually so reserved and forbearing, exclaimed, as if inadvertently, “ Ay ! the same artful impostor as ever.—Plummet could never sound the depths of ‘lying Fanshawe.’ ”

Had not his mind been thoroughly unhinged, he would not have let slip expressions so censorious.

But a season was now at hand when, by universal consent of Christendom, worldly cares are annually set aside for the celebration of the great festival of the year. Christmas, vouchsafed as a Divine endowment, like the Jewish Sabbath to the pristine hewers of wood and drawers of water, lest perpetual contest with the briars and flints of this world should prove too harassing, was coming with its white banner of peace and good will uplifted in the gloomy sky ;

to bring back the absent, soften the surly, and reunite disjointed bonds of family union.

The town of R——, as became its collegiate character, was uniformly prompt and lively in its Christmas demonstrations. The cathedral bells began to ring, long before the bells of less qualified steeples; and by St. Thomas's day, whole groves of holly and laurustinus made their appearance in the market-place. As in most cathedral towns, a variety of public doles were impending. Dame Bridget this, and Dame Mildred that, had bequeathed scores of silver groats and rations of manchet bread and strong beer, to hundreds of old men and women; while Sir Mamaduke Maultravers, knight of the shire in King Stephen's time, had given bolls of meal and bushels of malt to fifty Christian souls, to pray for the repose of his own at the festival of our Lord.

But besides these moss-grown benefactions, to quicken the languid circulation of the ragged purlieus of the city, beeyes and beer were liberally bestowed by the sitting members; and coals

and blankets sternly inflicted, with a suitable admonition, by the Bishop's lady. Sir Thomas Hargreave too, since he became a landed proprietor within the liberties of R——, had judged it becoming his income and his portliness to patronize the poor, during the season of universal philanthropy ; so that the same cart which conveyed from Dursley Park a buck to the corporation, and a leash of pheasants to the Dean, took over as many fat sheep for distribution, as the bailiff considered due to his master's standing in the county.

No wonder therefore that the bells chimed merrily ; and while the very beggars grew indifferent to the holes in their shoes, because donations of worsted stockings were impending, the rich were, in their turn, preparing to make merry. Real Twelfth cakes, variegated as with encaustic tiles, superseded in the confectioners' window, those fictitious moulds of jelly in yellow glass, or *pâtés de Périgord* in Wedgewood-ware containing, like Gratiano's dis-

course, an infinite deal of nothing. Little boys in comforters, and little girls in beaver bonnets, fondly twitched by the hand along the pavement by shopping parents, announced that the holidays had begun; and the plate glass windows of Priggins and Bradyll, the grand haberdashers and drapers of R——, whose mahogany counters and unparalleled sacrifices were worthy of Oxford Street or the Gazette, exhibited, instead of festoons of gauzy kerchiefs and filmy ribbons, a display of furs worthy of a bazaar at Astrakan.

The good Dean appeared to yield mechanically to the pressure from without. He listened without a murmur to Mrs. Pleydell's annual recapitulation of the statistics of the Dorcas Society, over which she presided, and to which he largely subscribed; the Branch Coal Society; the Cottage Scripture-reading Society; the Anti-Chimney-Sweepers' Association, and divers others of the humanity salves and elixirs, whereby the orthodox or

R—— affected to heal the wounds inflicted by their intolerance.

One day, after undergoing this penance till the words “grateful recipients of this judicious Charity,” seemed to ring in his ears almost louder than the chimes of St. Bennet’s, Margaret was injudicious enough to follow up the alms-hunt, after Mrs. Pleydell and her niece had hustled their circulars into their muffs, and themselves out of the room, by a petition in favour of one of nurse Hatley’s ever-craving offspring.

“Isaac Hatley writes me word, dear papa,” said she, “that he is to sail for Australia the end of January—”

“And a very good riddance, my dear, both for us and for his family.”

“But that his going depends on being able to make him up five-and-thirty pounds for passage money and outfit,” continued Margaret. “I am sorry to say, I have only five-and-twenty left. But if you would be so very good as

to advance me the other ten, I will repay it when we receive our arrears from Lady Milicent, which Williams assures me cannot fail to be within six weeks."

An involuntary gesture of impatience betrayed the incredulity of the Dean. He had previously shrugged his shoulders at her martyrdom to the encroachments of the Hatleys. He might have been even provoked so far as some peevish remark, had not his eye been caught by the sweet face of his daughter:—her lips apart while waiting his reply, and her soft gray eyes looking into his; as confident of favourable interpretation as his dear Mary's, in their happiest days of attachment.

To rebuke such a daughter would have been difficult; to deny her, was impossible. He was more inclined to be angry with himself for his first hasty moment of displeasure. His desk was open in a moment, and a cheque written; not for the ten pounds demanded, but the whole five-and-thirty extorted by Isaac Hatley.

"We must learn, dearest child, to be a little more chary of these fatal letters, L. S. D.," said the Dean, with a faint smile, as he placed in Margaret's hands the draft which was far more gratefully welcomed than if it had been a gift to herself. Something unusual—something constrained—in the tone of his voice, caused her, however, to pause in folding up the paper, which she purposed to enclose by the post to her *protégé*.

"In that case, dearest father, let me return this cheque to you," said she, with some emotion. "It was only because I heard Mrs. Pleydell parading your donations, and fancied you must just now be very, *very* rich, that I trespassed so largely on your purse."

"No, my child, keep it," said he. "I can afford you this little sum without inconvenience. It was rather to the future I

alluded, Margaret. To secure ourselves against being poor, we must learn, my little girl, to be prudent. Your brother's marriage will be a heavy pull upon us all."

"*My brother's marriage?*" exclaimed Margaret, in utter amazement; for so great a stranger was Reginald, in his natural home, that, at the name of brother, the idea of Willy alone presented itself. "I heard from him this morning. He alluded to nothing of the kind."

"It is only three weeks since he made the announcement to myself," replied her father. Nay, I doubt whether he would have thought it necessary to apply for my consent at all, had not my assistance in money-matters been wanting. Reginald marries his cousin, Anne Mordaunt; as everyone has long foreseen, and as her parents appear to have long intended."

"But so suddenly! And without a line

of intimation to any of us!" cried Margaret, a little relieved.

"My brother Mildenhall's precarious health has been made the plea for hastening the ceremony," said the Dean. "It is certainly expedient, since Reginald is to remain with them on the continent, that the marriage should be solemnized at once."

"Anne Mordaunt is older than my brother?" said Margaret, anxiously.

"By a year or two. I have not seen my niece since she grew up. She was a cold, silent child; too much like her mother for my taste. Lady Mildenhall is one of the most reserved, calculating women I ever met with."

Margaret had now re-seated herself, and replaced the cheque upon the desk.

"And does William know of this match?" she inquired.

"Most likely not. Reginald was always

cool and distant with his brother. Reginald has ever abided on that side of the house where the sun shone. He preferred Mildenhall Abbey to Bassington Parsonage. Even when here, he always appears to look down upon us. He does not, however, feel superior to drinking out of our scanty cruise, and stoops to share our crust!" added the Dean, more bitterly than could have been expected of his gentle nature.

"But may I not write and apprise Willy of an event so important to us all?"

"He will be here in a few days, Margaret. Time enough then to inform him. The settlements were signed by me while you were staying at Dursley. They cannot have reached Italy. The ceremony cannot yet be solemnized."

"I should have imagined that Reginald would desire the company of his only brother on an occasion so important," said Mar-

garet, musingly. "His indifference towards his family does not promise well for Anne Mordaunt."

"If my son's *indifference* were all we had to complain of!" ejaculated the Dean. "But let us not dwell upon the subject, my own Margaret. A thousand circumstances connected with this match (a match which, Mrs. Pleydell informs me, the world considers unexceptionable!) have, I confess, wounded me to the soul!"

"And you never breathed a word to me on the subject, dearest father. While harassed by this business, you have allowed me to molest you about endless frivolous interests!—"

"My little Margaret must not become careworn and wrinkled before her time!" said the Dean, again endeavouring to smile, as he accepted the dutiful kiss imprinted by his daughter upon his brow. "Time

enough to think and talk of it all when Willy arrives to teach us, with his cheerful spirits, to make the best of our troubles. And now, go and dress for dinner, Margaret. For the first bell has rung; and Harman grumbles sadly if the soup is kept waiting."

CHAPTER XIV.

I did send for thee
That Talbot's name might be in thee reviv'd,
When sapless age and weak unable limbs
Should bring thy father to his drooping chair.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was a sad drawback upon Margaret's delight, when William's cheery voice was heard in the hall, and William's manly step on the stair, that vexations of divers kinds were throbbing in her heart when pressed to *his* after so long an absence. The Ch. Ch. atmosphere which still surrounded

him on his arrival, would doubtless evaporate, the moment she disclosed her dismal story.

But to her surprise—perhaps to her relief—Willy would not hear of being miserable.

She told her worst, and he was nearly as joyous as ever !

“You amaze me, my pet,” cried he, “to have expected kinder dealing from Regy ! *I* gave him up two years ago—gave him up, I mean, as more than a tolerably gentlemanly acquaintance. We shake hands when we meet, and talk plausibly about the weather. But ever since he took to doing the heir-presumptive of Mil-denhall Abbey, he ceased to be a brother of mine.”

“Oh ! Willy, Willy !”

“Nay, I believe he has as completely forgotten as I have, that we ever wore patched jackets together at Bassingdon Parsonage. Regy is now such a painfully well-dressed,

well-mannered young gentleman, that, as the railway queen said of her king, 'he's like a pat of butter on a hot plate—one never knows where to have him.' ”

“Oh! Willy, Willy!” — again remonstrated Margaret. And in order, if possible, to render him a moment serious, she slightly alluded to her father's intimation of pecuniary distress.

William Mordaunt *did* listen then. For a moment, his cheerful face was overclouded. But the mist cleared off again as quickly.

“My dear Meg,” cried he, encircling his sister's waist with his arm, and looking fondly into her tearful eyes, “how can you be so absurdly cast down because my father, nettled by Regy's contemptuous usage, is labouring under a fit of dyspepsia! The old fellow is a little out of sorts; *that's* all. I dare say Harman has been bullying

him; or Mrs. Graves has perhaps been making his gruel too thick. — But in difficulties?—Impossible!—My father has a splendid income; and does not spend a third of it!”

“He makes us large allowances, Willy.”

“Granted. Thirteen hundred a-year, between the three; and Regy’s wages, I suppose, will now be raised. Not a bad dodge, eh! Margaret, to double one’s income by so slight a ceremony as matrimony. But even if the Mildenhalls have exacted a thousand a-year, the Dean of R—— must still have elbow-room to keep up the ball.”

“I am glad you think so; for you understand money-matters better than I do. But my father has always been so liberal—so charitable; and Harman and Mrs. Graves are such cormorants, that I cannot help fearing he is really a little embarrassed. When

he talked to me about it on Thursday, that is, when I *made* him talk about it, his hand was as cold as marble."

"Peoples' hands are usually as cold as marble when *made* to talk about things they dislike. My father above all; for he is naturally a reserved man. My father hates to discuss business of any kind. I have seen him hesitate about broaching a money question, as I do about pulling the string of a shower-bath. He used to take a third glass of claret, (in defiance of Harman and a fit of the gout), when, on the eve of our departure for College, it became necessary to vote the supplies."

"May you prove in the right," said Margaret, with a heavy sigh; for at that moment, it struck her that Willy had inherited some portion of their father's antipathy to disagreeable discussions. "But I

still think something serious is preying on his mind."

"You exaggerate, Meg, you really exaggerate, as the Gascon said to the executioner, who told him he was condemned to be hanged instead of broken on the wheel. When my father is undergoing a nervous fit, anything and everything preys upon his mind: and, like the feather and the dump in an exhausted receiver, all things have equal weight with him. The buzzing moth torments him as much as the gnawing worm. Ask Harman, and he will satisfy you that a few spoonfuls of Gregory's mixture will set the disorganised machine to rights. And now let us talk about something else, my dear child; and be Christ-massy and comfortable. Tell me about R—— and its whist tables?—Are the Pleydells plotting an evening entertainment against the peace of the place?"—

“I have seen little of them since they returned from Scarborough.”

“True. I forgot that you have been staying at Dursley, and grown fine and fastidious. You have probably learned to call the Pleydells *et hoc* ‘those people of R——!’”

“On the contrary, I learnt nothing at Dursley but to ride restive horses and dance the Mazurka,” replied Margaret, endeavouring to meet his livelier mood.

“Under the tuition of my friend, Herbert Fanshawe;—eh! Margaret?”

Her colour rose vividly as he spoke.

“Come, come! Don’t look guiltier than I hope, the occasion needs,” resumed William, carelessly. — “The worst I heard about you was that Herbert Fanshawe and the Hargreave girls have been inducting you into the mysteries of Belgravianism; and that you are not only up to riding Dun Patty,

with a snaffle, but to whispering in conservatories, and flirting over albums, like the best-taught Seraphina going !—”

“And who has been writing all this nonsense to you ?”

“Know me better, sweetest sister, than to accuse me of correspondance with any one but my tailor !—I have not read or written a letter for ages, except to and from your little ladyship—duns and lawyers’ letters excepted.—No, Meg ! the evil reported of you was told by word of mouth. Dick Hargreave, who has been in town with me for the last two days, informed me (and *his* hand, too, Margaret, was cold when he related the shocking fact) that you had cut out his sister Emma with our friend Herbert, and were both going it like an express train !”—

“And you believed all this ?”

“I believed that you had been snubbing

my friend Dick ; who appears, Margaret, to love you ' not wisely but too well.' ”

“ About as well as *you* love Esther Pleydell !—During my whole stay at Dursley, we did not exchange ten words !—”

“ Then it must have been your own fault, Meg ; for he preached about you till I began to long for the close of the sermon. Dick's powers of prosing are of the first quality.—He will one day make a model county-member.”—

“ At Dursley, Mr. Hargreave seldom opens his lips. At Dursley, he is a mere kill-joy.”

“ Because the only rational animal on the estate ! His family weigh upon him like lead ; and then wonder he has not spirits to dance on the tight-rope. Ha ! those dear old bells ! with their memories of snap-dragon, weak negus, and lady's fingers ; and Esther Pleydell drawing lots

for the last life at commerce.—How young it makes one, Margaret, to hear them again !”—

“Are you already old enough to want such a reminder?” said his sister, gaily.

“Older, by ten centuries, than when we parted,” was his careless retort ; “as old, within a hundred years or so, as that prince of grey-beards, my brother Reginald.”

“At all events, you have shown little haste to hear our poor bells : since you have been idling in town these two days.”

“Who told you I had been *idling* ? I wish the Lord Chancellor may ever work so hard ! I promise you Hargreave and I not only heard the chimes at midnight, but looked ten o'clock in the morning in the face, as well as the fogs of Gray's Inn would allow.”

“Dearest Willy, what can have taken you and Mr. Hargreave, together, to Gray's Inn !”

“To make our wills, of course. No

matter, Meg! The business that caused us to hunt in couples, so early, was of a nature to prove to me that Dick Hargreave is a friend worth scores of Fanshawes, or Reginald Mordaunts. I was going to say that Dick was the man for my money; perhaps, I ought to admit that I am the man for *his*. If it were not for that family of his, I would sooner see you married to Dick Hargreave than to the finest gentleman of my acquaintance."

An involuntary expression of repugnance overspread the delicate features of Miss Mordaunt. That sullen, silent, uncourteous being, who had all but sent her to Coventry; who walked every morning without apology, into his sister's morning-room to perfume it with his leather shooting-leggings; and who regularly went to sleep of an evening, when Mendelsohn or Beethoven, or the vague melodies of Schubert, resounded in

the music-room :—a man without a soul, and in a wide-wake ;—a man who knew not French, but was well-up in the Manual of the Art of Draining.—

For a time, indignation kept her silent. Nor was she in much haste to renew a *tête-à-tête* with the reckless brother, who might again attempt to break a lance with her in the cause of Dick Hargreave ; or hazard allusions to Herbert Fanshawe, which she scarcely knew how to parry.

Instead, meanwhile, of dwelling on her father's grievances, she resigned herself to be carried forward by the rippling current of her brother's gaiety. Whenever or wherever, a ray of sunshine appeared, it was sure to fall on William ; and the Dean, when he cut down the lime-tree because it gave shelter to song-birds and quivered in the summer-breeze, little anticipated that he should be one day afflicted with a son, whose carol

was perpetually audible, even through his baized doors.

Before William had been many days established at R——, the Hargreaves made their appearance with an earnest renewal of invitations. Though it had been a blow to the young ladies to discover that he possessed a surreptitious elder brother—a brother not only robust of health, but on the eve of marrying to perpetuate a superfluous branch, and shut out their views of the Mildenhall coronet,—they appreciated the value of Willy Mordaunt as a good-looking partner, and well-bred acquaintance. Besides they had been commanded by their peremptory father to cultivate the Mordaunt family, and were fain to obey. For Sir Thomas was absolute. And as the discriminating Hawthorne observes: “there is no greater bugbear than a strong willed relative in the circle of his own connections.”

The Mordaunts, however, were just then as hard to cultivate as Bågshot, or any other Heath. The brother and sister, severally uneasy, relied on each other's company for support, that each might be the better able to cheer the poor old Dean. Neither of them would hear of leaving him, even for a day. Home is doubly home at Christmas-tide; and to cherish even its tribulations appears a duty. Sir Thomas Hargreave's pheasants might have been sparrows, for any hold they obtained over William and his Purdeys.

It was in vain the two girls boasted to Margaret of the new and far pleasanter party about to assemble under their roof; for it is observable, in houses like theirs, that a perpetual change of slides in the magic-lantern is considered essential to its brilliancy; whereas in old mansions, the circle of friends and guests is as permanent as the rookery. They announced theatricals and

charades, and talked of a three pommelled saddle made by Whippy for Dun Patty, under their brother Richard's direction. But Margaret's ambitions about horsemanship were just then limited to the Bois de Boulogne ; and as to the coverts of Dursley, as far as she was concerned, they would have been drawn a blank.

The Dean sat chafing his thin shinbone before the fire without a word, during the explosion of Lady Hargreave's hospitality. In silence he heard her assure his daughter how charmed she would be with the bedroom of the western gallery, which had been refurnished since she left them ; and how her daughters' picture by Thorburn had arrived from town, and was waiting to be hung up till *she* had chosen the place.

He said nothing either to prevent or to promote the purposed visit. But when it had been firmly declined, and the Hargreave

tribe had rustled their voluminous skirts out of the room, and the door was closed, and all things restored to the stillness he so dearly prized, the Dean pressed Margaret's hand to his lips, and gently thanked his son for his kindness in remaining with him.

There was something inexpressibly touching in the humility of his paternal gratitude.

"I don't think the old fellow *is* quite well; his heart is so softened!" observed Willy to his sister, winking away a rising tear, when, soon afterwards, they found themselves alone.

Meanwhile, Paris—that butterfly which, in defiance of *crysalis* transformation, flutters its gaudy wings in winter time more gaily than at midsummer,—was tuning up the fiddles of thousands of orchestras, developing the interest of hundreds of new

dramas, and glittering in myriads of artistic inventions to tempt the generosity of the rich, the envy of the poor, and tickle into ecstasy those five poor senses vouchsafed us for milder exercise.

The *jour de l'an* was come and gone, with its *bonbons* and *étrennes*; an epidemic of pound-foolishness condemning the remaining twelve months to penny-wisdom. That effervescence of excitement which nothing but the spontaneous combustion of a continental crowd ever creates, was filling the theatres, the ball-rooms, the very streets, with smiling faces and merry voices whose gaiety is as the crackling of thorns.

Diplomatic fêtes abounded. The Tuileries shone nightly. Drama, song, dance, orgie, succeeded each other like tempting courses at the banquet of life. The Fanshawes, who were the very people to sup full of these highly-spiced viands, luxuriated in the

pungent atmosphere of Paris life, as revived wireworms dance merrily in vitriol. The levity of Parisian wit, with its epigrammatic repartees, was the diapason attuned for their ears; the malicious caricature or bitter sketch, the tit-bits meet their eyes. The son, an accomplished mimic, was able to enliven the histrionic suppers whose champagne is rendered *piquant* by professional spites, with imitations of our eminent performers, whether on the stage of the Theatres Royal, or of St. Stephens. He sang too with all the feeling in which he was deficient; and, thanks to these diversified accomplishments, obtained the sort of *succès* which sensible men disdain, and moral men abominate; but which an acolyte of fashion would purchase with his perdition.

Sir Claude looked on with a tolerant smile, which he mistook for a smile of

superiority. When any of his English friends deplored the dissipated habits of his son, he answered that "he had been young himself, and that *il faut que la jeunesse se passe.*" But to the French, he admitted his conviction that *les coulisses* and *les petits soupers*, masked balls and public gardens, constitute the academic portico of a young man destined for public life.

"*Il faut passer par là, mon cher !*" he observed to the Austrian secretary of legation, a *roué*, whose premature decrepitude afforded the best commentary upon the text. "*Avant d'être homme politique, il faut devenir l'homme blasé.*"

The K.C.B. himself, was as much at home on the *pavé* of Paris as Rob Roy on his native heath. Whenever in England, he found himself in danger of becoming an honest man, which *he* called growing prosy,

back he went to the land of double-meanings ; and, Antæus-like, had only to touch the asphalte of the Boulevards with his varnished boot, to renew his strength as a political intrigant. Whatever time hung upon his hands, he expended in that focus of finesse, where private life is a plot, and conspiracy the normal state of society.

In England, official men talk chiefly of Melton or Newmarket, ballet-dancers or cooks. Except on the day of publication of a new Edinburgh or Quarterly, or a crack pamphlet, or of the opening of the Session, or the downfall of a ministry, public measures are seldom canvassed among those who have enough to do in manufacturing them. The Sir Claude Fanshawes, who, like Shakespear's Bezonian (query *Bisognon* ?) must "speak or die," come to be voted bores, and soon find their house counted out.

But in Paris, where conversation is one

of the staple commodities of life, he found himself listened to, *à charge de revanche*, whenever he chose to pretend to the secret information, rarely, if ever, obtained by those by whom it is likely to be promulgated.

As "an Amurath, an Amurath succeeds," Sir Claude had hoped to find, in his brilliant son, an Hereditary Prince of Small Talk, who would fetch and carry early intelligence, correspond with *attachés* and editors, and mouth in the ears of the nobodies the nothings he had picked up among the somebodies. But, as yet, the handsome Herbert remained superior to the dirty work of such a vocation. He was "still climbing trees in the Hesperides;" still convinced that the Presence Chamber may be attained by the grand staircase as easily as by the back stairs. He felt qualified to carry the fortress of life by a *coup de main*, rather than descend to such petty strategy.

Herbert Fanshawe entertained personal projects, on the other hand, which he deemed it inexpedient to confide to the old diplomat so apt to over varnish his mask, that no one could mistake it for his face ; and, intense as was his enjoyment of the *bals masqués* of the Carnival, with their *soupers fins* and compromising breakfasts, he never lost sight of the Christmas visit he had promised and vowed to Margaret Mordaunt. January was passing away ; and, as yet, he had been unable to obtain leave of absence from Sir Claude, "to run over to England for a week or two." But, though that great parental authority had been the first to suggest the advantage of an alliance with the Dean's daughter, he saw safety in delay.

"I had not thought you so young, my boy, as to be enthralled by a pair of grey eyes!" was Sir Claude's sneering reply, when

Herbert solicited his passport, *i. e.*, a credit on his banker.

The Lovelace of the day was about to retort, "enthralled by the irresistible charms of sixty thousand pounds, with a slice of a tolerable landed estate," according to his father's previous suggestions. But he checked himself. He remembered, perhaps, the story of the wizard Michael Scott's finessing with the devil; and would fain have replied, somewhat after the fashion of that arch-master of glamourye,—“What is that to thee? Take thy pen, Diabolus, and write an order upon Drummond.”—But he felt that his cause would be better served by reminding his father of the precarious condition of Lord Mildenhall.

“At all events, wait the result,” was the cautious rejoinder. “When the Dean takes possession of his fortune, and the lawsuit is decided, time enough to come forward. I

have watched the Law Reports in the 'Times,' and the Bournemouth Will Cause has certainly not come on."

"But if the Mordaunts gain it, and the Dean becomes a peer and a millionaire, how many pretendants do you suppose will struggle with me for the prize?" said Herbert, arranging his whiskers with a pocket-comb. "First in the field, my dear father, is an advantage with which I do not feel myself qualified to dispense."

"You are grown wondrously modest of a sudden!"—retorted Sir Claude. "Luckily, I am at hand to prevent your committing yourself. I'll tell you what, my boy! If I had to begin life again, and found myself what is called in love,—by Jove! I'd cut out the place as if bitten by a mad dog, and cauterize the wound afterwards; to secure myself against any recurrence of a malady so frightful and so fatal."

Such was the influence against which Margaret had to contend. Such was the father of him for whom the prayers of the pure and high-minded girl rose nightly to Heaven, as fervent as those of a mother praying for her ailing child.

But Herbert was as yet a seraph compared with the corrupt old diplomat. Herbert, if wicked, was weak in wickedness. He was his own dupe as well as his father's. The delay imposed upon him was vexatious ; but he had not sufficient fixity of purpose to rebel against the interdictions of Sir Claude. A few days, moreover, served to reconcile him to his fate. No place on earth like Paris for obliterating resolutions, good or bad.

Even when Barty Tomlinson made his annual appearance at the Hôtel Bristol, to get up dinner anecdotes for the London season, and secure invitations to the Em-

bassy by informing *his* Excellency that his *cuisine* was a failure, and *her* Excellency that it was a slow thing to have a Spitz dog for a pet, when pugs were the only animals which Duff-le-magne considers worth the attention of the dog-stealers,—even when little Tomlinson informed him, while monopolizing the hearth-rug at the Cercle, that though he had so scandalously thrown over poor Emma Hargreave for the Dean's daughter, neither of them would be at all the worse for it—Miss Hargreave having picked up a case with an Irish peer, or Scotch bishop, or railway contractor, or something or other of that demi-semi-description ; while Miss Mordaunt had thrown him over, in her turn, for—he had forgotten whom,—probably the Master in Chancery to whom her Will Cause was referred ; even then, though he longed to lapidate the little gossip with his own flashy waistcoat-studs, he scarcely repented

having adhered to the city where hearts are so hard and *entrées* so tender.

The suppers of Eglantine, and breakfasts of Guy de Choiseul, were worth a hundred visits to the Deanery. Once caught up in the whirlwind of dissipation, the every-day world is lost sight of. Languid with irregular hours and wild excesses, the over-taxed instrument becomes out of tune; and there was more risk that Herbert Fanshawe might wreak retribution on little Tomlinson by one of those vitriolic retorts which burn to the bone and must be slaked with blood-spill, than disturb himself by a precipitate return to England to redeem an equivocal pledge.

One morning, while breakfasting with Sir Claude, at Tortoni's, on curried shrimps and *ailerons de dinde à la glace*, his father, unable to elicit more than monosyllables by way of conversation, from one who, having

gone through the conflict of a champagne supper at four, found it difficult to break his squeamish fast at noon, called for "Galig-nani," with his coffee, to aid his digestion. And a very potent *chasse-café* it is, that epitome of pungent condiments ! For if a tessellated page, variegated with close-grained polished fragments of "Times," "Post," "Chronicle" and "Daily News," "Examiner," "Spectator," and "Punch," fail to produce a brilliant mosaic, where, in the name of printer's ink, is entertainment to be found ?—

One by one, these dainty morsels of intelligence or opinion, underwent their deglutition ; with as much appetite as could be expected of a *chef* who had assisted in the cooking of the raw material of similar bills of fare. No one knew better than Sir Claude, that the "our long-founded and, we trust, not wholly uninfluential opinion of the policy of the

Porte," emanated, perhaps, from some lanky lad, dipping his steel pen into a maiden ink bottle, in an attic of the Seven Dials; and that the "Let the Treasury look to it. We have the best authority for believing that the division of Tuesday next must place an extinguisher on the most incompetent administration which ever did its feeble best to undermine the foundations of our glorious constitution," might be the froth of some miss in her teens, bitten by a rabid editor. But he was also wiser than to despise these atoms,—as susceptible of mischievous results as grains of gunpowder! but valued them as tin vanes are valued—because demonstrating the current of those tremendous breezes called public opinion; or as the dancing motes which serve to reveal the passage of the sunbeam.

"Here is that foolish fellow, Timpkins, of the "Pilot," attacking the Colonial Office

again, about the consulship at Ching-nang-fo!" said Sir Claude, peevishly, addressing his son, who was busy with his *rince bouche*. "He might just as well attempt to write down the sparrow's nests out of the steeple of St. Clement's!—But, eh! God bless my soul!—What have we here?—' On the 23rd of January, aged 54, at the Deanery of R——, after a very few hours' illness, the Honourable and Very Reverend Reginald Hammond Mordaunt, Dean of R——!'"

CHAPTER XV.

Parental love, my friend, has power o'er wisdom,
And as the charm which, like the falconer's lure,
Can bring from Heaven the highest soaring spirits,
So, when fam'd Prospero doffed his magic robe,
It was Miranda pluck'd it from his shoulders.

SCOTT.

BEFORE the reader is allowed to overhear the ejaculations of wonder extorted from the two Fanshawes, it may be as well to recapitulate the incidents preceding this grievous catastrophe.

The owl did not shriek, or the crickets

cry, nor so much as a bird of evil omen hover over the Deanery, to justify the slightest augury of coming mischance. On the contrary, soon after the arrival of William Mordaunt from Oxford, the old walls resounded with merriment. For as the Dean, for unexplained motives, had forborne to communicate to his son any unpleasant impressions made on his mind by Reginald's marriage, it seemed due both to themselves and the Mildenhalls to treat it as a festive occasion. No sooner, therefore, was the event announced by the papers to have taken place at the British Embassy at Florence, than William insisted that the establishment ought to be regaled. For a marvel, mirth and song resounded in the old cloisters; and untimely lights streamed from the mullioned windows of the Deanery.

The old gentleman was undisguisedly harassed by a concession he knew not how

to refuse; and Margaret long afterwards recalled to mind that, when the cheers celebrating the health of the newly-married couple, and the chorus to which more than one bass voice of the choir of R—— imparted consistency, shook the rafters of the old building, so as to reach even the sitting-room where the family was assembled, her father, instead of joining in the huzza half-ironically raised by William, heaved a profound sigh and “looked in her face till her heart was like to break.”

Three days afterwards, late in the evening, between tea-time and gruel-time, Harman, who, engrossed at that hour by much cribbage in the lower regions, never made his appearance save to place the Dean's bed-candle on a side-table, opened the door mysteriously, and advanced on tiptoe toward William:—“A gentleman wished to speak to him on business.”

“A *gentleman* wish to speak to me at this hour, on *business*?” exclaimed he. “What can this mean?—I am not aware of having insulted anybody.—Who the deuce is wanting to call me out?”—

Harman now produced a card; and the Dean, shading his eyes with his hand, began to examine what was going on in the room more scrutinizingly than he usually permitted himself to do by candlelight.

“‘Mr. Mathan?’ By Jove! old Lazenby’s confidential clerk!” cried William, starting up after a glance at the card. “He would not come at this time of night except to announce good news. Our suit is won. Depend on it, Meg, our suit is won! Put candles into the dining-room, Harman, and show Mr. Mathan in there,” he continued, on perceiving that his father had turned as pale as ashes,—almost ghastly,—and was by no means in a state to give audience to a

comparative stranger. A moment afterwards, Margaret found herself alone with the Dean ; who was evidently so faint that, but for the fear of mortifying him by marking her perception of his overmuch solicitude for the things of this world, she would have fetched him a glass of water.

“Margaret, my child !” said he in a hoarse and hollow voice, as soon as he could command his utterance, “set not your heart upon success in this business. My mind misgives me, Margaret. These Lazenbys were from the first over-sanguine. Wraxley had always a bad opinion of the business. Be calm, Margaret,—be resigned !”

How much more need had the Dean himself of being exhorted to composure !

A silence of suspense ensued ; during which, the old clock might have been heard ticking louder than it was ever heard to tick before. Margaret held her breath to listen for her

brother's returning footsteps. But it was only because her father's whole senses seemed concentrated in the interest of the impending crisis.

At length, William calmly re-entered the room ; so calmly, that his sister saw in a moment all was lost ; even before she noticed that his face was nearly as colourless as his father's had been a few minutes before.

"I have to make these peoples' apology to you, Sir, for disturbing you so late," said William, as if he wanted patience to pronounce their names. "But they were anxious we should not first hear of our defeat through to-morrow's newspapers. The bad news came down by express. We have lost our suit."

"Well ! we are no poorer than we were before. We cannot be said to have lost what we never enjoyed," observed Margaret, eager to make the best of what she saw was

a source of bitter disappointment to her father.

“How can you talk such confounded nonsense?” said William, inexpressibly irritated by what, unaware of the state of his father’s mind, he considered her stupid apathy. “Is it nothing to have that dirty sneak Macwheble appropriate our inheritance? Is it nothing to have that confounded hypocrite, Lady Milicent, triumph at our expense?”

Margaret attempted to pacify him by a few palliative words, which only served to add fuel to the fire.

“Enough to satisfy all our reasonable desires, do you say? Of course we have! But why are we to be a perpetual burthen to my father?—Why are we to encroach on his income?—This fellow, Mathan, has just owned to me, Margaret, that the mere costs of the suit will exceed a thousand pounds!”

He spoke as if unaware of his father’s

presence ; and probably was so ; for disappointment and remorse were agitating every fibre of his frame. Luckily for all parties, Harman, anxious for a little insight into what might have arisen from a visit so untimely as Mathan's, anticipated the usual moment for bringing in the gruel tray ; and, as so often occurs in civilized life, the presence of a servant startled all parties into a sense of propriety.

“ I want nothing more to-night, Harman,” said the Dean, addressing him in a voice so low that none but an accustomed ear could have distinguished the words. “ Light my candle, and give me your arm. I feel a little gout flying about me. I should like to go to bed at once.”

William was grateful to his father for the movement ; for he had much to say to his sister. Not as before, angrily. For he now perceived that, while he was accusing her of insensibility,

tears had fallen silently, and been silently wiped away. And the moment the family "good night" had been spoken, and the door closed carefully upon Harman and his master, the agitated young man started forwards, strained his sister to his heart, and entreated her pardon.

"I was so horribly put out, dearest; so grieved—so thwarted—so miserable!" cried he. "Forgive me, if I thought you selfish and insensible. I forgot how ignorant you were of the extent to which this disappointment will involve and compromise me. Those infernal lawyers!—I relied so implicitly on their honesty—"

"Be just—be just!—They must have deceived themselves, not us."

"On their professional sagacity then,—that I have been daily adding to embarrassments already considerable. Ass that

I was, to be so confident ! I am not only deeply in debt, Margaret ; but in a manner the most painful—to friends, to acquaintances,—who may perhaps suspect me of having deceived *them*, as *I* have been provoked into accusing the Lazenbys.”

“ Impossible, dear Willy !—You, the soul of honour !—Besides, the papers will publish every particular of the trial.”

“ Ay, small thanks to them ! The morning’s papers will announce that in *re* Mordaunt *versus* Macwheeble, the plaintiffs were dismissed with costs—*with costs* !—Whereupon the post of the following day will bring me cartloads of duns.”

Margaret folded her hands in despair. The decent economy of Hephanger had screened her girlhood against all experience of pecuniary distress. To *her* the word dun was a word of shame.

"My father will assist you, Willy; my father is all kindness," said she, in a depressed voice.

"Ay poor dear good old soul! But *can* he, Margaret?—What reason have we for supposing that he possesses the means?—My father has been sadly hampered (he has owned as much to me, or rather I have taxed him with it, and he could not disown it,) by Reginald's marriage. However, let us say no more about it to-night!" he continued, kissing her, and placing her candle in her hand, alarmed at seeing her so pale. "Better try and sleep off the blow. Night, they say, Meg, is a cogent counsellor. Pray, therefore, that before to-morrow I may have received its best advice."

Before the morrow, William Mordaunt sustained a stroke still more severe. After tossing upon his pillow in all the feverish disturbance of a spirit at odds with itself,

he fell at length asleep—heavily asleep—as people are apt to do whose faculties have been overtaxed during the day. Like most persons labouring under painful excitement, he dreamed of unpleasant things, occurring in pleasant places; of bird's-nesting with Margaret at Bassingdon, and hiding afterwards from Mrs. Hatley's wrath at a torn frock and tanned shoulders; of driving a tandem with two bolters from Oxford to a Woodstock ball; or starting from Oak Hill to win the cup in Dick Hargreave's yacht the “Nautilus,” and losing their bowsprit.

His spirit seemed to hover like a light insect from flower to flower; now, all honey and sunshine,—now all poison and storm.

From these visions, he was recalled by an unusual sound. When it ceased, he troubled not himself with its origin, but turned to sleep again. A fortnight before, he had been woke twice by the waits, and reproached

himself next morning for having suffered their snoring trombone to disturb his rest.

Before he had dozed long, however, he was roused by a candle shining close before his eyes. His own man was calling him. For a moment, he fancied it was a hunting morning, and that he was late for the meet.

"You had better get up, if you please, Sir," said the man, "the Dean is took very poorly. Miss Mordaunt's been about him for the last half hour. Mr. Harman's half out of his wits, Sir, and the medical gentlemen is not yet come."

In a moment, William was in his dressing-gown, and at his father's bedside. The Dean was speechless. It was easy to see that, for once, a servant's account of sudden illness was not exaggerated.

Harman explained all readily. For some

days, the Dean had been labouring under flying gout. Sudden emotion had sent it to a vital part, the head or stomach. When the Doctors came, they, of course, unsettled all by asking a multiplicity of questions wholly foreign to the case, and inconsistent with the habits of the sufferer; insisting that the Dean must have been out and got wet that rainy day, though he had never left his room; or taken a few extra glasses of wine, though his strongest potation was water-gruel.

Having conferred together, both doctor and apothecary decided that the patient must lose blood, and a surgeon be instantly sent for.

“If you bleed him, gentlemen, you’ll kill him, that’s all!” exclaimed the indignant Harman, losing sight of his usual pomposity in the urgency of the case. And William having represented that this faithful servant

had been familiar with his master's constitution for the last thirty years, they condescended to pause in their plans of assassination, and suggested that mustard poultices might first be tried.

They *were* tried and with effect ; for consciousness was gradually restored. Before day had fully dawned—a dreary, sunless winter's day, that seemed made to dawn upon affliction—the Dean extended his hand to his daughter, who was standing like a marble statue beside his bed. Margaret, who had never expected to see him move again, burst into a flood of tears. Her hopes revived. She blessed God that the old man her father was yet alive.

“Let me hope that you will excuse my abruptness, Sir,” said one of the medical men to William Mordaunt, as soon as circumstances admitted of their withdrawing

together from the sick chamber; "but I grieve to say no time must be lost, if you suppose that the Dean has any worldly affairs requiring adjustment."

"My father is in imminent danger, then? Yet surely the symptoms are improving?"—

"With less than supernatural strength of constitution, I fear he cannot live through the day."

"I have heard that said of him before, in similar attacks, yet he still survives," said the sanguine young man, his agitated looks belying his expressions of confidence. "I thank you, however, for your warning, and will consult with my sister."

But Margaret would not hear of the alarming intimation being extended to the patient.

"With my poor dear father's nervous temperament," said she, "such an announcement would be fatal."

"He may, however, have important papers

requiring signature, which render it our duty to apprise him?"

"They can involve no interest but ours. Dear Willy! I entreat you not to alarm my poor father in his present weak state."

"At least, let me send for the Archdeacon. Prayers are read with the sick as well as the dying. It might comfort him to talk to Pleydell."

"His anguish is far too great to admit of spiritual consolation. As regards his preparation for death," said Margaret, her pale lips quivering at the word, "my father's life has been harmless as that of a child. He has no sins to repent—no restitution to make."—

"We have all sins to repent," replied William, more sternly than might have been expected of his thoughtless nature.

"At all events, do not send for the Archdeacon. Every word uttered by my poor,

suffering father would be repeated to Mrs. Pleydell, and by her to the whole town of R——.”

“Have your own way, Meg!” said the harassed young man, heaving a deep sigh; “but if my father should die without a parting word of comfort from the ministers of his faith, or a last word of farewell to his children, be the heavy responsibility on your head.”

Margaret was so far justified in her reluctance, that the sufferer was undergoing severe bodily torture. His features were convulsed with pain, and his parched lips muttered words that scarcely appeared words of prayer.

By degrees, as the fever augmented, delirium came on; and even the awe-struck Harman, so much accustomed to minister to his master's distemperatures, lost all power of counsel.

"I never saw my master so before, Miss Mordaunt," whispered he, with knitted brows and quickened respiration. "I'm afraid, poor old gentleman, he's past help. I'm afraid we must prepare for the worst."

Intervals of restless sleep, procured by opiates, in which the Dean still kept grinding his teeth or murmuring to himself, did not suffice to cool the two hectic spots burning brightly on his sallow cheeks.

William Mordaunt, fondly believing that a real amendment was taking place, quitted the house for half an hour, while he slept, to advise with one or two of the nearest friends of the Dean.

Towards evening — but evening comes early in January to deepen the sadness of a gloomy day — Margaret was sitting in the sick-room, lighted only by the fire, and a single watchlight.

"Who is with me? — Who is near me?"

cried the dying man, starting, with a rambling mind, from his feverish slumber. "What woman abideth beside the sepulchre, faithful in the watches of the night, and amid the howlings of the storm? Oh, Mary, dear Mary! leave me! I am unworthy of you. I have ruined our poor children. I have left them penniless to the mercies of the world. Save me, Mary. I have been a careless, selfish father—thinking more of my own ease than of their worldly or spiritual welfare. And now, I must atone for all. Now I must burn in hell. Oh! agony—I suffer—I suffer — Mary, Mary — save me!"

A cold dew burst from the brows of Margaret, as shriek after shriek escaped the lips of the tortured man. How was she to act? To ring for help was to expose his conscience-wrung avowals to the vulgar wonder of his servants. To leave him

without better aid was, perhaps, to hasten his end.—How, how was she to act?—Falling humbly upon her knees, she prayed for comfort from above, and Heaven's mercy upon them both.

The professional friends, consulted in the mean while by William Mordaunt, insisted, as is usually the case, that the Dean ought to be apprised that his end was approaching. The Archdeacon reminded his young friend that Dr. Mordaunt was not a child to be intimidated by the aspect of death; that, accustomed to prepare others for their end, he must be prepared to meet the event as became a dignitary of the Established Church. It was the duty of the universally-respected Dean of R—— to set an edifying example of death-bed resignation. Messrs. Lazenby argued, on the other hand, that it was the prior duty of a man approaching to three score years of age, not to slip out of the world

without having provided for his just debts, and lawful issue. The Dean was the representative of interests, public as well as private. The affairs of the Chapter might require enlightenment at his hands. For anything they knew, he might not have even made a will. They, Lazenby and Son, had often given the Dean such hints on the subject as delicacy would permit, but could not answer for it that they had been attended to.

The currier of course proposed to fortify the town with leather; and the end of all this was, that William returned to the Deanery, accompanied by the Archdeacon and Mathan; who were, however, by the interposition of Providence, spared all further exercise of their narrow judgment, and worse taste. From the moment of reaching the lobby at the head of the stairs, the groans and cries of the dying man reached their ears; proving that reason had left him,

and that life was departing. There was something unspeakably appalling in those sounds, in a spot so uniformly still and decorous: above all, in the wild uplifting of that voice, through life so low and plaintive.

The men who came to counsel, spake no further. A greater than they was dealing with the mortal about to put on immortality.

Before a last loud outcry, followed by a momentary stillness, and next by an outbreak of sobs, announced that all was over, the lawyer and divine had quitted the Deanery; dreading to become spectators of a family affliction, which they were not conscious of sufficient warmth of heart, or elevation of soul, to exhort with composure.

CHAPTER XVI.

Hark! how the flood
Of the rich organ harmony bears up
Voices on its high waves—a mighty burst!
And the old minster, forest-like and dim,
With its long avenues of pillared shade,
Seems quivering all with spirit, as that strain
O'erflows its deep recesses; leaving not
One tone unthrilled by the strong sympathy.

HEMANS.

THE cathedral of R—— tolled a muffled
peal in honour of its popular Dean. The
head verger not only attached a crape to his
rusty hat out of respect to his memory; but

throughout the day, was unable to attend to his duties, or for weeks, to hear mention of his name without tears. The decorous High Street darkened its shops; and from one end of the town to the other, lamentations were heard over the sudden death of Dr. Mordaunt.

The nine thousand seven hundred and thirteen souls so long submitted to his charge, recalled to mind the urbanity of his manners and kindliness of his nature. Rich as he was in all exterior Christian graces, it was not for them to decide what secret sins he might have committed, or what private duties left unfulfilled. Whether he evinced culpable weakness in suffering the rights of the Chapter to fall into desuetude, or the unorthodox to escape unpunished, was no question for the laity. But that, through life, he had borne and forborne, constituted his best virtue and apology.

And oh! that greater men would emulate his charity of soul.—Better for the Christian Church—better for the heathen universe.

In the Cathedral Close, the departed Doctor of Divinity did not escape so easily. As a dignitary of the Church, he had been lax, inert, indifferent. The man who, in earlier days of heresy and schism, would never have decreed the burning of a fellow Christian, had refrained in days of Tractarianism from persecuting or prosecuting backsliders. Dr. Mordaunt had done nothing to uphold the autocracy of the crosier, or augment the revenue of the Court of Arches. And, how could he be lamented as a champion of the Church, in a cathedral town, where the voice of the Canons, like the cannon's mouth, affords *ultima ratio*.

These professional displeasures, however, had little influence on the opinions of the community. The popularity of the late

Dean was too well established ; and lo ! a splendid funeral was soon in process of preparation. By a will executed ten years before, Dr. Mordaunt had enacted that he was to be laid among the Deans, his predecessors ; and the ceremony was likely to be as imposing as became the occasion. The precedents of office were to be upheld : —a paramount duty in such a spot.

The existence of that will had afforded to William Mordaunt a consolatory surprise. Contrary to his father's dying declarations, Margaret and himself proved to be sufficiently provided for ; while an especial clause regarded the payment of his just debts and funeral expenses. Dr. Mordaunt bequeathed to his younger children a policy of insurance for the sum of fourteen thousand pounds sterling secured in the Sun Office, burthened only by the clause in question ; a vast sum for the Dean to have set aside out of his

preferment, considering the cost of insuring a life so notoriously precarious.

Relieved beyond measure to find that his sister would not be dependent on the liberality of Lord Mildenhall and Reginald, and that he should be able to free himself from humiliating obligations, he observed to his sister that, in his last moments, their poor father's intellects must have been wandering. But Margaret had no thought to bestow on silver or gold. Her heart was crushed within her. For the second time within twelve months had death snatched away, without warning, one on whom she relied for love and protection ; for the second time within twelve months, she had had to revile her own error of judgment in ministering to their infirmities. Twice had she failed. Twice had she done amiss. But for her, Lady Bournemouth and her father might be still alive ; or at least, have died absolved and comforted. Poor

self-reproachful girl! What need of such morbid remorse to increase the misery of her orphan condition!

She was kindly watched over, however. All the wives of all the canons, all the ladies of birth and breeding comprehended in the 9,713 souls, were prompt in attention. Some offered her their company; some a home. No one would hear of her being left to herself. Mrs. Pleydell profited by privilege of seniority as oldest friend, to be the most intrusive. She came armed with tracts and common-places, such as fall unnoticed on the ear which thirsteth for a voice that is silent; and when she found that Margaret's mourning was ordered by Mrs. Graves, and that the Dean had not left the Archdeacon so much as a ring for a memento, she went on her way mumbling, under a strong sense of ill-usage.

Even from Dursley Park came affectionate letters, entreating that Margaret would make

that house her home, till her plans were determined. Lady Hargreave would come and fetch her immediately, or on the day of the funeral, which Sir Thomas and his son proposed attending in person. Miss Mordaunt should have a suite of rooms to herself; and not be asked to join the family for as many weeks as she might feel disposed to seclusion. Nothing could be better felt than the invitation; nothing better worded. Lady Hargreave wrote to her as a mother; the girls as sisters; and, to the infinite distress of poor Margaret, her brother was of opinion that she would do wisely to accept their proposals.

“You cannot remain here, darling,” said William, after many soothing words. “By the will of my poor father, it is provided that his furniture shall be immediately sold; and his successor will probably be desirous to secure it, and take possession, as soon as decency will allow. What will become of

you, Meg, till, by mutual arrangement, I have a home to offer you? Reginald has been written to. But I am convinced that, so far from coming over to attend the funeral, as there is ample time for him to do, his father's death will not hasten his return from Italy by a day or an hour."

"My uncle's health and comfort are probably his first object."

"No! His first object is the comfort and convenience of one Reginald Mordaunt; which you will find out hereafter, Margaret, as *I* have found out already."

"But why must all this drive me to Dursley Park?" mournfully remarked his sister. "Why can I not take refuge, for a time, in lodgings at R——?"

"A girl of your age?—*alone*? Not to be heard of! It would not be decent. It would not even be respectful to my father's memory; for you know how much he would

have disapproved such a step. Besides, the thing would never be allowed by all these people. Mrs. Pleydell, Mrs. Barnhurst, the whole set of them, would be up in arms. They feel a sort of prescriptive right in you."

"They are all very kind—far kinder than I deserve. But if you knew what a comfort it would be to me to be alone! I have so many serious things to reflect upon—to decide upon!"—

William looked at her in some surprise.

"Not so serious, I should think," said he, "but that the society of your own sex might be a solace and advantage. We have not many personal friends, my poor Margaret. Take my advice, and propitiate their kindness. The time may come, my darling sister, when you will look round the world, and not find *one* ready to step forward and take you by the hand."

Margaret's heart grew colder and colder. But she knew that her brother's admonitions were not only well-meant, but that they might be wiser than she could wish. That Herbert Fanshawe, on learning the misfortune which had befallen her, would hurry back to England, she did not a moment question; and when six days had elapsed after the announcement in the papers of her father's death, she hourly expected his arrival. Devoted as was his affection, he would come and claim her of her brother. He would come and tell her that, the moment the forms of society permitted, she must become his wife. He had admitted, in brighter hours, how fondly he loved her. It was his duty, therefore, to console her affliction, and lighten the heavy burthen of life. At any minute he might appear. And how could she bear that he should find her amidst the heartless vain-glories of Dursley Park?

Still, William must have his way. He was now her guide and counsellor. He stood in her father's place. Reginald, even when he became Lord Mildenhall, would never appear in *her* eyes half so much the head of the family as William;—darling Willy, her first friend;—darling Willy, who had closed the eyes of their father.

She authorised him, therefore, to answer Lady Hargreave's letter, and accept her friendly offer. And he did so in grateful terms; for he was already better aware than Margaret that friends are fruit which grows not on every bush; but requires care and warmth in the cultivation.

He felt comforted in knowing that, for a time, his sister was secure of a tranquil home; that womanly hearts would surround her. William had a notion, natural at his age, that kindness, decency, and peace are natural products of a feminine atmosphere. Solaced by her own sex, the spirit of his

poor sister would be soothed, and the wounds of her heart healed.

But when she was gone—when she had been carried half insensible down the dim staircase of the Deanery for the last time, and placed in Lady Hargreave's carriage, the night before the funeral, which being of a public nature, did not admit of compliance with her pious wish to follow her father to the grave, or even of her remaining in the house of mourning, where so numerous a train of mourners was to assemble,—then, indeed, he almost repented the persuasions he had used; so miserably lost did he feel,—alone—alone with the dead!

He paid a last visit to that darkened chamber, of which the undertakers and their pomps were about to take possession. He knelt beside the coffin—he moistened it with his tears; he asked pardon of him who could pardon no longer, for the offences

of his careless childhood, his unguarded youth ; and at length rushed from the room, his heart full, and his eyes overflowing.

He had not recovered even the semblance of composure, when Harman stepped up to him with a request, which at that moment he considered importunate. But Harman had already ceased to be the servant of the house. Provided for, to the amount of some hundreds, by the will of the late Dean ; he and Mrs. Graves had selected the crisis of a death in the family to notify publicly their marriage, long tacitly understood by their indulgent master. Immediately after the sale at the Deanery, they were to set up in "some genteel business," in R—— ; and an air of independence already sharpened the aspect of the pseudo householder, as he informed the son of his benefactor that "Mr. Mathan was waiting for him in the library."

William Mordaunt declined the visit. "He was not equal, just then, to business." The last disastrous visit of Mathan to that house had been productive of consequences so fatal, that the very name sounded like a death-knell.

"I believe Mr. William," persisted the ex-butler, "you had better see him at once. Mr. Mathan is here, Sir, on business of the utmost consequence. He is here on business that cannot be deferred."

As if any business could be of a nature to supersede the self-communing of a son who had just taken a last leave of the ashes of his only surviving parent!—Best, however, control his feelings, and comply.—It was no moment for altercation.—

When William entered the library, he found the lawyer's clerk, instead of adhering to his usual respectful decorum, pacing the room fretfully, and wiping his forehead with

a handkerchief, as if his walk to the house had been a hurried one.

“I should perhaps apologise for intruding, Sir,” said he, in a tone anything but apologetic. “My employers are, however, so uneasy, that, judging you would probably quit R—— immediately after the funeral to-morrow morning, they are desirous of entering into a few urgent explanations.”

William had not courage to bid him sit down. But as he himself sank into a seat, Mathan mechanically followed his example.

“Circumstances of a delicate nature connected with the estate of the late Dean Mordaunt, have transpired,” said he, abruptly, “which determined my employers last night, to despatch me at once to London for a conference with his professional advisers, or rather the professional advisers of the Mordaunt family, Messrs. Wraxley and

Lumm. From these gentlemen, Sir, (though they appear to have been hurt at your selection of our firm to prosecute your late Chancery suit,) I received much courtesy; and had no difficulty in obtaining information which I cannot but think, I cannot but *hope*, Mr. Mordaunt, will prove as new and unexpected to yourself, as it has been to Messrs. Lazenby and Son."

William removed the hand by which he had been screening his features from observation, and looked his visitor full in the face. These uncourteous preliminaries roused his broken spirit. The hoarse altered voice in which he ejaculated, "What do you mean, Sir?—Speak out!"—would have silenced anybody short of a lawyer's clerk.

"I mean, Mr. Mordaunt, that the will you have entrusted to us for probate, is null and void; and that the Dean your father, has died insolvent."

“You heard this from Wraxley and Lumm?” faltered William, aghast.

“I heard from them, Sir, this very morning, that the policy of insurance which constitutes the personal estate of the deceased, was made over by him, only three weeks ago, to his eldest son; on occasion of his marriage settlement with the daughter of Lord Mildenhall, for the benefit of the issue of that marriage.”

“For the benefit of children unborn, when his own were wholly unprovided for?—Impossible!”—

“Scandalous, Sir, if you please; but, unluckily, not impossible. Lord Mildenhall demanded a provision for his daughter, whose fortune it seems, is not tangible till his demise; and the reversionary sum in question was all that Dean Mordaunt had to offer.”

“My uncle could not have been so grasp-

ing—my brother could not have been so base!—But why do I say so?—When were those Mildenhalls ever otherwise than base and sordid!—And Reginald is their mere shadow. Yet, my father—surely, surely, Mr. Mathan, my father cannot have been persuaded into such an act?”—

“The Dean, Sir, with your pardon, has always been a weak man—a man of whom Mr. Wraxley truly observed, that his physical infirmities seem to have enfeebled his moral nature. Lord Mildenhall insisted—his son was importunate—he gave way. Messrs. Wraxley and Lumm admitted that the concession was one *they* could not, in justice to their own character, have *suggested*. But when dictated by the Dean's own flesh and blood, (aristocratic flesh and blood, moreover, and consequently sworn to honourable dealing), why were *they* to be more squeamish?”

“Flesh and blood !” faintly repeated William Mordaunt.

“But it is not to canvass the equity of this family compact, I am here, Sir,” added Mathan, suddenly recovering his professional squareness; “I am deputed by Lazenby and Son, to inquire, with all due respect and courtesy, to whom they are to look for payment of the heavy sums owing to them, not only by the late Dean Mordaunt, but by yourself. Business is business, Sir, even under circumstances as delicate as the present. In a word, Mr. Mordaunt, the costs of the suit commenced under your instructions, were undertaken by your late father, as far as concerned his daughter Margaret Mordaunt, a minor, and must fall on his insolvent estate. But you, Sir, having attained your majority some months before you did us the honour to entrust us with your

business, are liable for the payment of at least one moiety of our claim, amounting to £1272 9s. 6d. The justice of this you really cannot dispute."

"The justice, no !—The propriety of urging it at such a moment is another matter."

"You must make allowances for our position, Mr. Mordaunt. We have been deceived into a considerable outlay."

"*Deceived?*"—retorted William, with a heightened voice and colour.

"The expression may seem harsh, but the fact is undeniable. Who was to suppose, Sir, that a highly-beneficed clergyman, the brother of a peer of the realm, a man universally looked up to and respected, like Dean Mordaunt, would die at last without leaving a rap behind him ! Excuse me if I speak plainly ; but I call it deception when hard-working professional men, like myself and my employers, are deluded into giving our

time and credit on the showing of opulence which does not exist, and probity which seems to have been nearly as problematical."

William Mordaunt started up with a half-clenched hand. But only to subside into his chair. A brawl under the roof of his unburied father would be almost worse than listening to insults to his memory.—The peace of the House of Death was sacred!

"I have no wish to offend you, Mr. Mordaunt," said Mathan, in a lowered tone, sympathising as far as his professional practicability would admit with the filial warmth of the young man he had been goading and tormenting. "All I wish is to come to a clear understanding with you, on behalf of my employers, before we lose sight of each other. Messrs. Wraxley and Lumm let fall a hint that when Dean Mordaunt acceded to the extraordinary demands of his brother and son, it was on an undertaking

among the parties, that at his decease, the younger children should be properly provided for: I say properly provided for, a phrase which (under your permission,) means everything and nothing. I am consequently instructed by Messrs. Lazenby and Son, to inquire whether you sanction our applying, on your behalf, to Viscount Mildenhall, or to Mr. Reginald Mordaunt, for an arrangement concerning the liquidation of claims?"

"Certainly *not*!" was William's firm reply.

"Not when you reflect, Sir," continued the lawyer's clerk, glancing round the disordered room, "how inadequate will be the product of your late father's personalty, to defray even his funeral expenses—far more his just debts—which you will find, I am afraid, considerable?"

"Mr. Mathan, I adjure you as a man and

Christian, spare me these calculations just now!" cried William, harassed out of all self-control. "Forbear only for four-and-twenty hours. Forbear only till the grey head which lies in the adjoining chamber is quiet in the tomb. I promise you, as a gentleman, not to quit R—— without granting you another interview. I promise you to do my best to meet your demands—to lay aside all pride, all wilfulness such as you may have heretofore seen in me.—I will submit to every thing—I will be as amenable as you can wish—on condition that, till my poor father has been followed to the grave by his son, his friends, and his townspeople, you refrain from circulating rumours to his discredit."

"*I* circulate—" Mathan was indignantly beginning.

"Not another word, Sir!" interrupted

William, incensed into the utmost emotion. "We have each our duties to perform;—and by the God of Heaven if you so much as whisper a syllable against the memory of him I have lost, you shall have cause to wish you had never been born.—Ay! even though my own ruin be the cost of my vengeance."—

With a man thus excited, Mathan saw it would be useless to argue. He took his hat and departed. It would be worse than idle to record the angry words that escaped his lips as he encountered, in descending the stairs, a portion of the pompous paraphernalia prepared to grace the interment of the insolvent Dean.

Less bitter, but not less vigorous, were those which burst from the soul of William Mordaunt, when, on the exit of his persecutor, he flung himself on the sofa

and buried his head in the cushions,—to close his ears against the closing of his father's coffin,—to stifle his groans over the downfall of his father's house !—

CHAPTER XVI.

Queen. For Heaven's sake, speak comfortable words.

York. Should I do so, I should belie my thoughts.

Comfort's in Heaven, and we are on the earth,

Where nothing lives but crosses, cares, and griefs.

SHAKSPEARE.

THOSE who saw him officiate next morning as chief mourner at the imposing obsequies of him who had already passed out of date, and was called by lawyers' clerks "Dean Mordaunt," instead of the popular Dean of R——, were of opinion that they never beheld a more edifying example of

filial piety.—William was oldened by ten years.—William was a wreck !—

He had not closed his eyes the preceding night. He had not even taken off his clothes, or tasted food, save a draught of water ; and so wan was his face, and so seared his eyes, that though not a tear had escaped them, he looked as if he had been weeping tears of blood.

One of the oldest of the elders who arrived with bowed heads and solemn footsteps at the Deanery, took him by the arm, and bad him in God's name be comforted ; for so profound was evidently his distress, that all pitied, and many feared for him. Still, he continued absorbed, like one moving in a dream ; closing his ears lest, peradventure, he should overhear a whisper reflecting blame on his father—averting his eyes, lest he should behold scornful or indignant faces. The undertaker's man who handed him his

mourning-gloves, observed afterwards to the sobbing housekeeper, that never had he touched so icy a hand.

There was enough in the scene around him to paralyse even a less feeling heart. The pageant had been projected when the children of the Dean believed themselves entitled to mark by a liberal outlay their gratitude for his self-denial in setting aside so large a portion of his income to provide for their welfare ; and many things were as sumptuous as accorded better with his aristocratic birth, than with his Christian vocation. What mockery, what vain-glory ! What discrepance between those emblazoned escutcheons and waving plumes, and the dust about to be scattered upon the less than dust they were consigning to darkness and the worm !

Nevertheless, to the vulgar eye the ceremony comported suitably with the dignity and popularity of the dead. The assistants

being chiefly of the clergy, a becoming solemnity governed their movements. The honour of the diocese was at stake. The old Cathedral was doing its best. Never had the organ pealed more impressively through its groined arches than for that touching requiem ; never had the sweet voices of the choir breathed more exquisitely the beauty of holiness. The finest of our Church-services could not have been better because it would not have been more simply recited, than by the venerable Bishop ; who had come from afar to do honour to his noble subordinate. The people of R——, and more especially the poor of R——, crowded the aisles. Impossible to be more augustly impressive than the gloomy mummery, wherewith we attempt to conceal under a show of ghastly triumph our defeat at the hands of Death !—

Poor William, who knew that the voices

which now hymned his father's praises, would shortly be vindictively upraised against him, shuddered while he listened. Another day, and those who felt themselves defrauded, would deal with his name as with that of an enemy or delinquent. What would he have given, at that moment, to be away from the gorgeous chancel, with its gem-like windows and heraldic scutcheons, to be away from the pealing anthem and the white-robed choir, in some quiet village churchyard ; where the name of Mordaunt was unknown, and where there was nothing but the green sod upturned to receive the remains about to be consigned to their last abode.

But this was not to be. Other trials had still to be gone through. He must maintain his strength and govern his deportment. Thousands of eyes were upon him. Even when the body had been deposited in the vault, to moulder among the preceding Deans,

whose brasses tinged the walls with verdigris, or whose marble effigies slumbered in arched niches around, ceremonies had still to be accomplished. Forms of etiquette must be observed in the taking up of mourning-coaches; and already the official mourners were moving off with alacrity, as from a painful duty brought satisfactorily to an end. While the scuffling mutes were squabbling with the crowding populace, he had to listen respectfully to the formal condolences of the Bishop, and shake hands gratefully with Sir Thomas Hargreave. He had to be stared at and commiserated by nearly five thousand people.—Five thousand people, and not a single friend!—

The torture of the traveller in the desert, thirsting after a drop of water, so forceful and so true, has been so abused as a simile, that it shall not be burthened with the representation of William Mordaunt's feelings.

He *was* alone in a desert, however ; and he *did* thirst as with the parchedness of a barren and dry land where no water is. And when he ascended the lonely stairs at the Deanery—a house whose echoes were now subdued as the sighs of human sorrow—his head reeled and his pulses faltered.—Oh ! aching sense of loneliness ! why was not his sister there ?—Why was not *any* one there who could so much as exhort him to say, “ God’s will be done ! ”—

Even the servants were away, loitering of necessity among the latest of the hooded mourners. Even the ticking of the clock was silent.—

William rushed wildly into his chamber, as if to repay himself for the restraint heretofore imposed upon his movements ; and there, what joy unhopèd for, he found himself clasped to a bosom which loved him as its own life. Honest Dick Hargreave was

seated there, in deep mourning, to await his return and share his burthen of sorrow.

"I am come to take you from this place. You must not remain here. No, my dear William; whatever your inclination, indeed you *must* not remain here," said Hargreave, after a mutual expansion of feeling, which, for some minutes, kept them silent.

William Mordaunt replied nothing, even in the negative, beyond a mournful waive of the head.

"I do not ask you to join your sister at Dursley," continued Hargreave. "Dursley is not the place for you just now. Let us travel, William. I am ready to go with you where you will."

Almost impatiently, William Mordaunt shrugged his shoulders.

"If you have not courage for a long tour, then," resumed his friend, misinterpreting the meaning of his gesture, "Oak Hill is

at my disposal during the winter months. Come with me, at once, to Oak Hill. *There* you will be at peace—there you will have leisure to form plans for the future.”

“Plans for the future!” murmured William, at length urged into reply. “What plans am I at liberty to form? Look at me and pity me, Hargreave! I am no longer a free agent. He whom you have seen so independent, so prosperous, so bold, so wayward, is now a poor, abject beggar—worse than a beggar. Were you other than the noble fellow you are, and did I love you less than I have always done, I should now see in you, not the kind friend come to comfort me in my distress, but a creditor—a man whose heavy claims upon me I may never have the means of discharging.—Pity me, Hargreave!”

For a moment, poor Dick, who had never seen displayed by William Mordaunt stronger

emotion than became a Christchurch dandy—accepting the vexations of daily life in almost too easy a style,—fancied that excess of grief had over-taxed the mind of his friend. His first anxiety was to tranquillise him. He allowed him, therefore, without further molestation, to exhaust his irritability in hurriedly pacing the room.

“You are shocked at my violence,” said William, interpreting his look of consternation, “and no wonder! But you will see me madder and more wretched still, Dick Hargreave, if you continue to interest yourself in my fate. You will see me, when I have been forced to break the heart of my dear Margaret, and tell her she is without a shilling—without a home;—that her natural protector, ruined like herself, must dig, or beg, for her daily bread.”

“I entreat you to be calm, William; nay, I insist upon it that you compose your-

self," said Hargreave, leading him forcibly to a chair, as he would have done a furious child or raving lunatic.—“You are not yourself.—These are delusions—”

The over-excited young man replied by a laugh all but hysterical.

“If you would but prove to me that I am dreaming!—But I know what I am saying.—I am as sane as you are.—This is R—— Deanery, Hargreave. This is the day of my father's funeral. This is the very room where, ten days ago, he enjoyed his usual health, the love and respect of his children, the esteem of his flock. I am rational, you see. My mind is as composed as my feelings are distracted.”

“For both our sakes, then, indulge them less wildly. Confide in your friend. What has thus moved you?—Some one has irritated you.—Some enemy has injured you.”—

“An enemy? No! The being whom next to God I loved and revered; the being who, let him have used me as he may, I shall learn to love and venerate again, when the wounds now rankling in my heart have ceased to bleed. My father, Hargreave!—my poor father—apparently so kind and generous,—my poor, poor father.”

Tears now relieved his anguish; tears of which his companion was careful not to interrupt the course. Having wept himself, not into composure, but into exhaustion, William commenced an explanation of his miserable position; not very lucid or coherent indeed, but sufficiently so to impress the mind of Hargreave with heartfelt compassion.

“This is a grievous history, my dearest William,” said he, after a patient hearing. “But remember that, at present, you have only a single authority for its authenticity.

The Lazenbys may have deceived you,—may have deceived themselves. I know that, in some transactions he had with them, my father formed no great opinion of their judgment. Even supposing the worst—which Heaven avert!—why need you despair?—You have resources in your family. Lord Mildenhall cannot but provide liberally for the nephew and niece his mean instigations have so wronged.”

“Mean once, mean ever.—My uncle will do nothing for us.”

“Your brother then—”

“Let him clear my father’s memory from obloquy. I ask no more of him.”

“And besides these resources, you have youth, health, intellect. Remember the motto of the princely house of Gruthuys which we admired so much last year at Bruges,—‘PLUS EST EN VOUS!’—You will be your *own* benefactor—your sister’s.”

"Hargreave! I feel at this moment, as if every good angel or good impulse had deserted me. I feel as if, even for *her*, I was incapable of exertion."

"You feel so because you are exhausted by grief, by anxiety, even by fasting. You must take food—you must take courage. You must quit this spot till you are more equal to look your trials in the face."

"It would be indeed a relief," said William, glancing round the cheerless room. "But people situated as I am cannot indulge their inclinations. Already, I am a prisoner. I have pledged myself to see Mathan again before I leave R——. I cannot break my word."

"Let me see him in your place."

"No, he wants more of me than word of mouth. These people, these Lazenbys, are afraid, forsooth, lest their wretched debtor should escape them. They want to tie me

down by signature to a discharge of my debt."

"But even *that* could be as easily undertaken from Oak Hill as from this house."

"They don't seem to entertain so much confidence in my honour," said William, bitterly. "I doubt whether they would allow me to quit the town."

"Not quit the town? Confound them! But you cannot have understood them rightly," said Hargreave, readily conceiving that his companion's exalted state of feeling at that moment might lead him into exaggeration. "At all events, I really cannot allow you to be exposed to an interview with Mathan. I will start this moment for Lazenby's office, and undertake, by a few words, to bring the old man to a sense of decency."

"Why should *you*, my dear fellow, be embroiled in this wretched affair!"

“It is no case of embroiling. The Lazenbys are *our* attorneys as well as yours; and my father's business is worth their utmost consideration. I answer for it, William, that you will hear nothing further from these people after I have explained the nature of your situation.”

There was no need to mortify William Mordaunt's harassed feelings at that moment, by stating that he intended to offer his own signature as security for the discharge of the debt.

“If, therefore,” he continued, perceiving that the resolution of his friend was wavering, “if I bring you back from them a letter expressing their acquiescence in our plan of leaving R—— this night, will you consent to accompany me to Oak Hill? My britschka with posters will be ready for us in an hour. Dear William!—be persuaded.—Do not refuse your friend!”

Resistance would have been difficult, even in a less exhausted condition of mind and body than that of William Mordaunt. He assented. While Hargreave took his hat and rushed off to procure from old Lazenby a document such as he knew he should experience no difficulty in obtaining, William with Harman's somewhat reluctant aid, prepared for departure. It was a trying effort. Though the servants had been careful to remove out of sight the principal personal effects of their late master, a thousand unconsidered trifles were still lying about, replete with afflicting associations : a favourite walking-stick, on whose crutch he was fond of leaning ; a pair of furred gloves, which he had worn on the morning of his seizure ; a blotting-book in which there still remained impressions of his tremulous hand-writing. Heart-rending, indeed, to lay aside for ever these vivid traces of one whose memory was

“We are enjoined to honour and obey our parents, not to judge them. As you have loved yours living, love him still! Between *him* and his Maker be his sentence. It is much to have lived and died, as he has done, in charity with all mankind.”

William heard, but heeded not. Enfeebled as he was, however, he suffered himself to be led like a child from the room. The servants, muffled in their new mourning, stood afar off, at the foot of the stairs, to witness his departure from the desecrated Deanery. They were still panic-struck, at the sudden break-up of the family.—What then were the sensations, that grievous evening, of the homeless children of the Dean?

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LONDON :

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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